

*The Future
in
Education*

By
SIR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE

W. E. A.
Edition

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THE FUTURE IN EDUCATION

By
SIR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE

President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford

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PREFACE

THIS book does not deal with primary, technical, university, nor, except for an isolated chapter, with secondary, education. All these, though susceptible of development and improvement, are firmly established. The great need and opportunity is in another field, of which a corner has been occupied but of which much is barely cultivated and part unexplored. The pressing problem is to give the masses of the nation some higher education, which will include that study of human ideals and achievement which we call literature, history and politics, and that study of the material universe which we call science. In some form, these are essential to the full development of all human beings, but at present the majority of the nation has no chance of studying them. How can this be altered? That, the most serious educational problem of the day, is the main subject of this book, which does not attempt to deal with details of organisation, but rather to suggest the principles to be followed.

I am convinced that secondary or post-primary education can give little help in solving the problem and that it can only be solved by adult education. Nothing is more needed than to revise our views as to the best age for 'cultural' education. If we could do that, the road would be open for one of the great educational advances of history. Ask anyone what is the right age for education, and the reply will probably be 'from 6 to 15 or 16, with an extension to

18 for more intelligent children, and to 21 or 22 for a picked few'. I do not of course question the need for elementary education to 14 or 15, the uses of secondary and university education for some, and the importance for all of maintaining between 14 and 18 some contact with educational influences. But, after 50 years spent in receiving or giving education, I am convinced that for the studies in question the years after 18 are a better age, and those after 30 better still.

This may seem a paradox. But everyone witnesses to its truth who says 'I wish I could have my education again'; and who, at some time of his life, has not said it? That phrase is the best argument for my view. Expanded, it would read: 'I was educated at an age when I knew so little of life that I could not really understand the meaning or use of education. Now that I have seen something of the world and of human beings, I realise what education can do for me and the real value and significance of many subjects which I studied years ago with little appetite and less understanding under the compulsion of a teacher or an examination. If I could only go back and have again the chances which I wasted, simply because I was not old enough to use them!'

In Chapter II I have given my view of the reasons why we all wish to have our education again, and I do not believe that there is any answer to the arguments there. Roughly my contention is that for full appreciation and the most fruitful study of the subjects in question—history, literature, and politics—experience of life is necessary. If so, certain conclusions follow.

First: the years of post-primary education (i.e.

from 15-18) cannot be the best period for these studies. In particular the ordinary man of average or low intellectual ability will get little from them before the age of 18; and therefore the majority (who at present receive no education after the age of 14) can only study them satisfactorily in their adult years.

Second: without an extended system of adult education we cannot have an educated nation (suggestions for such a system are given in Chapters III and IV).

Third: those who receive a secondary education—graduates included—need an opportunity for resuming study methodically in later years when they have had experience of life (Chapter V).

The Postscript is unconnected with the main theme of the book and deals with a grave weakness in our secondary education, from whose effects, unless it is remedied, the nation will increasingly suffer.

The book develops ideas advanced in the Presidential Address to the Education Section of the British Association in 1934; part of Chapter II has appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* and most of Chapter V in *Public Administration*. Professor Ernest Barker and Sir Alfred Zimmern read the book in manuscript and helped me with valuable suggestions.

R. L.

March 1941

NOTE

THE call for a second impression gives me an opportunity to quote the following extract from a letter of the Vice-Principal of a Training College, sent to me as a topical illustration of the principle put forward on pp. 12 ff. below:

"One of my students was 'doing' Macbeth with an intelligent fifth form class of boys and girls in a secondary school. They were politely interested in a rather detached way, but somewhat sleepy as a result of nights badly disturbed by raids which had been particularly heavy in the immediate neighbourhood of their school and homes. The course of the lesson however was immediately speeded up, and the atmosphere was literally revitalised when we came to the following lines which Shakespeare gives to Lennox in Act II Scene III.

The night has been unruly; where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death;
And prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion and confused events
New hatch'd to the woful time; the obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night; some say, the earth
Was feverous and did shake.

Incidentally the broad smiles which greeted the reference to the 'obscure bird' which 'clamour'd the livelong night' made me feel proud of these English boys and girls who had so recently passed through terrible ordeals."

R. L.

May 1941

THE FUTURE IN EDUCATION

CHAPTER I

THE EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM

WHY are we an uneducated nation and how can we become an educated one? We have compulsory education, magnificent schools, an impressive array of teachers, and an enormous educational budget. Yet most of the passengers in a railway carriage will be reading the *Daily Mirror*; and the *News of the World* has a circulation of between three and four millions. The advertisements, cheap newspapers and films of a country are the best index of what appeals to its masses. What view would posterity form of our civilisation from these manifestations of its taste and intelligence? Contrast with our cinema the drama which the whole Athenian people watched in the bright March weather millennia ago. What fraction of our masses would sit through a performance of the *Trilogy* or the *Philoctetes*?

It is not that education has been neglected. Between the Forster Education Act of 1870 and the 1891 Act the country organised elementary education. The Balfour Act of 1902 began a new era in the organisation of secondary education. In the early years of the twentieth century universities were created throughout the country. Since 1889 technical instruction has been developed thoroughly and effectively. That is

a great achievement. In all these fields—university, secondary, technical, elementary—the problem has been faced and roughly solved. Improvements and developments will come; but the main lines have been well laid and are not likely to be altered. We have the tools, even if we may often use them ineffectively. In the future they may be improved and elaborated, but the chief improvement necessary is that we should learn more of their use and purpose, and our worst failures are due to the fact that we drift into and through education in a mechanical, automatic, unthinking way, instead of clearly defining to our own minds what we wish education to do for us and asking whether it is doing it and, if not, why not. Like religion, education quickly degenerates into a routine; then its meaning and its effects are lost. Still the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have done a great and solid work in it. So far, so good.

But all this still leaves a vast gap—I had almost said, a bottomless pit—in our national education. Some 70 per cent of the children of the nation are entirely withdrawn from any educational influence at the age of 14.¹ But education which ends at that age is not an education. It might be plausibly argued that nearly all the money spent on elementary education is wasted,

¹ In 1937-8 of the 347,096 boys leaving elementary schools in England and Wales, 284,372 (81·9 per cent) left to take up employment: of the remainder 12 per cent went to secondary schools, and 5 per cent to junior technical schools or other full-time educational institutions.

because the system is, on the face of it, absurd. If you taught a child the letters of the alphabet and then stopped, you would probably consider that you had thrown time away in teaching him the ABC. Yet that is what we do in our elementary education. Elementary education is not complete in itself. It is preparatory. It prepares the pupil to go on to something else, and puts his foot on the first step of the ladder of knowledge. But in fact the vast majority go on to nothing else, they never climb higher on the ladder than the first step. How many pupils whose education ceases when they leave an elementary school maintain afterwards anything that can be called intellectual interest? How many think with any real seriousness about the problems of politics on which as electors they are expected to decide? How many read books worth reading? How many read books at all?¹ What have they gained adequate to the vast sums spent on them? The chief uses of our present elementary system are to enable a minority to proceed to further education, and the rest to read the cheap press. I am not criticising our elementary schools or their teachers, or denying the necessity of elementary education for all.

¹ The following figures of books issued in a year per head (approximately) of the population by the urban libraries of certain counties are characteristic but not encouraging: Cornwall 3, London (Metropolitan Boroughs) 5, Glamorgan 6, Lanarkshire 5. One must, of course, allow for children under sixteen and for those who possess adequate libraries of their own, but also remember that many of these books were novels.

But unless it leads on to something else, it is as useless as a ladder which has no rungs beyond one or two at its bottom or as a railway from Oxford to London which ends at Didcot. To cease education at 14 is as unnatural as to die at 14. The one is physical death, the other intellectual death. In fact we have left the vast majority of the population without any kind of liberal education. We have provided for the minority who attend secondary school and university. We have shown the rest a glimpse of the promised land, and left them outside it. Aristotle may have gone too far when he said that the object of education was to help men to use their leisure rightly. But we have treated the majority as if they were to have no leisure, or as if it did not matter how they used what leisure they had. Art, music, science, literature were for the few. The rest were disinherited from some of the purest and highest pleasures. They might be machines or animals; men in the full sense of the word they could not be. That is the type of democracy with which we have been, and are, content.

It mattered, perhaps, less in the past. When the working-man had no leisure, why educate him to use something that he would never have? The question barely arose. But to-day it is arising, and in the near future it is likely to be urgent. In 1900 most men had enough to do to earn a living. In 1950 or 1960 they will probably have the opportunity to be more than bread-winners. But if the leisure of the future is to

be entirely devoted to the films and the dogs, civilisation will not have gained much by it. Fifty years ago leisure was no concern of any but the well-to-do, who mostly wasted it. To-day its use is becoming a problem.

What then, would you say of a nation which believed this, and which acquiesced in the greater part of its people leaving school at the age of 14 and being thrown straight into the deep waters of life? Would not the old proverb rise to your mind, *Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus*? For consider what a child has learnt by the age of 14. He can read and write and do arithmetic. He has made a beginning in many subjects, and received a training which enables him to use an opportunity of learning more. But of history, except in a superficial sense, he knows nothing; of the forces that affect the fortunes of the country, which as a voter he will help to determine, he knows nothing; economics, historical traditions, political theories are a closed mystery to him; he will have opened the great book of literature but he has had little time to turn its pages; of science he is even more ignorant. Most of my readers probably did not leave school at 14; many went to the university. Let them ask themselves how it would have fared with their intellectual and spiritual life if their education had ceased at 14. Would they be willing that their own children should leave school at that age? Yet that is the lot of the great majority of children in this country. And we have been singularly complacent

about it. We take it calmly, because we are used to it, and human beings see nothing wrong in abuses to which they are accustomed. But our descendants will view it as we view the slave trade or debtor's prisons or child labour, which our ancestors accepted as natural and harmless institutions; and the sooner we anticipate the views of our descendants, the sooner we shall end a national disgrace. What is the remedy?

CHAPTER II

AN IGNORED EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLE

WE have, I believe, wholly overlooked a vital principle in education. Its neglect is largely responsible for the limited success of the education we have; and the great problem of national education will never be solved until we take it into account. The principle is: *That almost any subject is studied with much more interest and intelligence by those who know something of its subject-matter than by those who do not: and, conversely, that it is not profitable to study theory without some practical experience of the facts to which it relates.*

In some fields this is recognised. Medical students walk the wards while they study surgery and medicine; they see operations and therapy instead of merely reading about them in text-books; and the quickening of interest and understanding, which comes when they enter the hospital and see their problems in the flesh is well known. So with engineering; practical experience in the workshop is sandwiched with study of the theory. A famous firm, that used to take students direct from the university, found that a better method was to take boys into the works for a year after leaving school, and then release them for the regular university course, so that they went to theoretical training with

some practical knowledge of the work. The same holds with other subjects, such as literature, history and philosophy, where it might be less expected. The most interesting—not necessarily the ablest—pupils I ever had came to the university not direct from school but after a period in the army or business or some other practical pursuit. Unlike the great majority of undergraduates who study history and literature, and even politics and ethics, when they know hardly anything of the subjects with which these deal—human nature and life—these other students had seen something of both and were better prepared to think about them.

This truth, though it has never been applied to education, was known long ago. One of the few writers on politics who always talked sense, and, while he looked at things as they are, never forgot what they should be, wrote:

One may enquire why a boy, though he may be a mathematician, cannot be a philosopher. Perhaps the answer is that mathematics deals with abstractions whereas the first principles of philosophy are derived from experience: the young can only repeat them without conviction of their truth, whereas the definitions of mathematics are easily understood.

And again,

The young are not fit to be students of politics, for they have no experience of life and conduct, and it is these that supply the premises and subject-matter of this branch of thought.¹

¹ Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* vi, 8, 6; i, 3, 5.

In these words Aristotle says that the young are unfit to study philosophy or politics, and states his reason for thinking so. It is because they have no experience of the subject-matter of either. Philosophy and politics deal with conduct and life and human beings, and the young have seen very little of either life or men. That does not prevent them from talking about these subjects, but it diminishes the value of their opinions; they have no practical experience by which to test the truth of their theories, they repeat what they read or hear, or, in Aristotle's expressive phrase, "they repeat without conviction" (*οὐ πιστεύουσιν ἀλλὰ λέγουσιν*). "A boy cannot be a philosopher", because he has no experience of the concrete facts, on which philosophy is based: "the young are not fit to be students of politics, because they have no experience of life". That is, you cannot study fruitfully certain subjects, among them philosophy and politics, unless you know something of life. On the other hand there are subjects, such as mathematics, of which a boy or undergraduate is fully capable, even if he knows nothing outside the walls of his home, school or university. For whereas politics and ethics are concrete, mathematics is purely abstract and theoretic, and does not spring from life or need experience of life to illuminate or correct it.

These views of Aristotle are supported by the curious fact, that high achievement seems possible to the young in mathematics and in music which,

depending on abstract relations of sounds, is closely allied to it. Mozart wrote a concerto and played in the Hall of Strasburg University at the age of five, Bach and Schumann were composers before they were twenty-one, Schubert in his eighteenth year wrote two symphonies, five operas and 137 songs. But how few have ever written anything worth reading on history or politics or ethics or even on literature before the age of twenty-five! What great tragedy was ever written by a young man? *Prima facie* Aristotle appears to be right in saying that politics and ethics are not studies for which the young are properly equipped.

Aristotle makes this observation incidentally in the course of his famous book on Ethics. The basis from which Newman's *Grammar of Assent* starts is the same point—our incapacity really to understand “mental facts of which we have no direct experience”.

How shall I imbibe a sense of the peculiarities of the style of Cicero or Virgil, if I have not read their writings? or how shall I gain a shadow of a perception of the wit or the grace ascribed to the conversation of the French salons, being myself an untravelled John Bull? . . . Not all the possible descriptions of headlong love will make me comprehend the delirium, if I never have had a fit of it; nor will ever so many sermons about the inward satisfaction of strict conscientiousness create in my mind the image of a virtuous action and its attendant sentiments, if I have been brought up to lie, thief and indulge my appetites. Thus we meet with men of the world who cannot enter into the very idea of devotion, and think, for instance, that,

from the nature of the case, a life of religious seclusion must be either one of unutterable dreariness or abandoned sensuality, because they know of no exercise of the affections but what is merely human; and with others again, who, living in the home of their own selfishness, ridicule as something fanatical and pitiable the self-sacrifices of generous high-mindedness and chivalrous honour. They cannot create images of these things, any more than children on the contrary can of vice, when they ask whereabouts and who the bad men are; for they have no personal memories, and have to content themselves with notions drawn from books or from what others tell them.¹

Newman carries the matter further than Aristotle, making an important distinction between two kinds of apprehension; the apprehension of something from a book or by hearsay at second-hand, and the apprehension of something at first-hand from direct experience of it, from life. The difference is between the man who knows war from Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, or Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and the man who has been in a front-line trench; between the knowledge of unemployment, which can be acquired from a book like *Men Without Work*, and the knowledge of it possessed by the unemployed or by those who live with them. Newman does not deny some value to the first kind of knowledge, but he says that it is far less intense and real than the second. In the second case we have a *real* apprehension of something

of which we have had direct experience; in the first case we have only a *notional* apprehension (as he calls it) of something that we have read or heard of but never known at first-hand. (This is exactly what Aristotle means when he talks of repeating ideas "without conviction".) Further, while Aristotle remarked that politics and ethics cannot be properly understood without some experience of life, Newman argues that the same is true of subjects such as history and literature; that even these cannot be grasped merely from books, without some first-hand knowledge of their subject-matter, and therefore that they are imperfectly appreciated by the young.

This is the gist of a famous passage, where he points out how little we understand in youth even of literature which we admire, and how its full meaning is only revealed as knowledge of life grows.

Let us consider, too, how differently young and old are affected by the words of some classic author, such as Homer or Horace. Passages, which to a boy are but rhetorical common-places, neither better nor worse than a hundred others which any clever writer might supply, which he gets by heart and thinks very fine, and imitates, as he thinks, successfully, in his own flowing versification, at length come home to him, when long years have passed, and he has had experience of life, and pierce him, as if he had never before known them, with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness. Then he comes to understand how it is that lines, the birth of some chance morning or evening at an Ionian festival, or among the Sabine hills, have lasted genera-

tion after generation, for thousands of years, with a power over the mind, and a charm, which the current literature of his own day, with all its obvious advantages, is utterly unable to rival.¹

“When he has had experience of life.” Read Homer and Horace by all means, says Newman; feed mind and eye and ear with their images and language and music; but do not expect to understand what they are really talking about before you are forty.

This truth was first brought home to me more than thirty years ago one December day, as I walked down the road from Argentières to Chamonix after a snow-fall, and suddenly from the abyss of unconscious memory a line of Virgil rose into my mind and I found myself repeating

*Sed iacet aggeribus niveis informis et alto
Terra gelu.*²

I had read the words at school and no doubt translated them glibly “the earth lies formless under snow-drifts and deep frost”; but suddenly, with the snow scene before my eyes, I perceived for the first time what Virgil meant by the epithet *informis*, “without form”, and how perfectly it describes the work of snow, which literally does make the world formless, blurring the sharp outlines of roofs and eaves, of pines and rocks and mountain ridges, taking from them their definite-

¹ *Grammar of Assent*, p. 78.

² *Georgics*, 3, 354.

ness of shape and form. Yet how many times before that day had I read the words without seeing what they really mean! It is not that the word *informis* meant nothing to me when I was an undergraduate; but it meant much less than its full meaning. Personal experience was necessary to real understanding.

It is a familiar phenomenon how something which we have read or heard, without paying much attention to it or seeing much meaning in it, some lines of poetry, a passage in a book, some remark of a lecturer or schoolmaster or tutor suddenly acquires meaning and comes to life, because we ourselves have had the kind of experience to which it related; as though suddenly a spotlight fell on the dark background of our mind, and revealed in clear outline something lying latent and forgotten there. Among the minor effects of the Great War was an entirely new appreciation of certain aspects of those Greek writers whose writings were coloured by the Peloponnesian War. In all ages competent judges have recognised in Thucydides the greatest of historians and one of the acutest of human intellects. But it was after 1918 that we saw the real meaning of much in his political analysis; such, for instance, as

The sufferings which revolution brought on the Greek states were many and terrible. In peace and prosperity nations and individuals have higher standards because they are not involved in involuntary necessities. But war, depriving men of their easy

circumstances, is a savage teacher, and brings men's characters down to the level of their fortunes.¹

It is not that these words meant nothing to us before 1914, but their full meaning was only revealed when we had ourselves had a like experience.

It is easy to multiply examples. Take the passage where Tacitus describes life in Rome under Domitian.

Ancient times saw the extremes of freedom; we have been deprived by espionage of the right to exchange ideas, to speak or to listen, and have seen the extremes of servitude. We should have lost our memory itself along with our voices, if it had been as much in our power to forget as to hold our tongue. Now at last our spirits are recovering, but by the nature of human weakness remedies work more slowly than diseases, and as our bodies grow gradually but perish in a moment, so it is easier to crush talent and its pursuits than to revive them. The charm of indolence creeps over the mind and we end by loving the inaction which at first we detested. Over a period of fifteen years (a long space in human life) many died from natural causes, the most active were put to death by a cruel emperor, a few of us, surviving not only others but even ourselves, passed from manhood to old age and from old age almost to the end of life's course, with our lips sealed.²

One read those words as a schoolboy years ago and detected their bitterness and power. But in this generation they have ceased to be literature and come to life,

¹ Thucydides, iii, 82.

² *Agricola*, c. 2f.

because Europe has actually experienced what Tacitus went through and knows now what he means: and Germans or Russians or Italians know better than Englishmen.

Or again take the close of Shakespeare's *King John*, where the French invade England assisted by disloyal nobles (the "fifth column" of that time). Faulconbridge brings the latest news from the front.

All Kent hath yielded; nothing there holds out
But Dover Castle: London hath received,
Like a kind host, the Dauphin and his powers:
Your nobles will not hear you, but are gone
To offer service to your enemy.

King John shows his dismay, and Faulconbridge continues:

Be great in act, as you have been in thought;

Be stirring as the time; be fire with fire;
Threaten the threatener and outface the brow
Of bragging horror; so shall inferior eyes,
That borrow their behaviours from the great,
Grow great by your example and put on
The dauntless spirit of resolution.
Show boldness and aspiring confidence.

Again we know how John felt and how Faulconbridge urged him to feel because we have lived through an analogous experience. For the same reason, how well we can now enter into the meaning of Wordsworth's Sonnet:

Another year, another deadly blow,
 Another mighty empire overthrown,
 And we are left, or shall be left, alone,
 The last that dare to struggle with the foe.

To have seen something with our eyes, to have met it in life or in ourselves, is the way to understand the theory of it; and without such experience full understanding is impossible.

If our education is to be really fruitful, we must recognise a principle which has been almost wholly ignored in education—the cross-fertilisation of theory and experience. There is or should be a continual interaction between the two. No one has put this more clearly than a writer who is not generally regarded as an expert on education, though he wrote a series of famous letters about it. It would be disastrous to bring a boy up by the methods suggested in Chesterfield's letters to his son, but education would be more advanced if some attention had been paid to one passage in them:

Do not imagine that the knowledge, which I so much recommend to you, is confined to books, pleasing, useful and necessary as that knowledge is. But I comprehend in it the great knowledge of the world, still more necessary than that of books. In truth, they assist one another reciprocally; and no man will have either perfectly, who has not both. The knowledge of the world is only to be acquired in the world, and not in a closet. Books alone will never teach it you; but they will suggest many things to your

observation, which might otherwise escape you; and your own observations upon mankind, when compared with those which you will find in books, will help you to fix the true point.¹

How obviously true that is! Theory and practice illuminate each other. We know what Virgil meant by the word *informis* when we see the roofs and trees blurred with snow, but also we appreciate the effect of snow, because Virgil's eye saw and his pen described it and we have read

*Jacet aggeribus niveis informis et alto
Terra gelu.*

Because we lived through the Great War, we know what Thucydides meant when he said that "war is a hard schoolmaster which brings men's characters down to the level of their fortunes"; but also we understand better that effect of war because we have read Thucydides. Hamlet means more to us when we have met him in life; but equally we understand the Hamlets of the world better if we have read Shakespeare's play. Only when Lear was turned out of his palace into the pitiless pelting of the storm did he understand the life of his poorer subjects, "houseless heads and unfed sides",

Exposed himself to feel what wretches feel.

If he could have read that passage in *King Lear*, he might have understood earlier. When we have taught

¹ Letter dated 4 October 1746.

we begin to see the meaning of books on education; but equally, when we read the books, the processes of education acquire a new meaning and its pitfalls and problems grow clear. Without theory practice is unintelligent, without practice theory is not understood.

If certain subjects need experience of life for full and fruitful study, how will this affect our educational practice? Our school population has hardly any experience of life; most university students have little more. Are their studies a waste of time? What, if anything, do they get out of them?

First note again that certain subjects need no experience of life for their full comprehension; among these are mathematics, languages, the sciences and some aspects of geography. No experience is required for such subjects. French or Latin, algebra or geometry, chemistry or physics, are perfectly intelligible, even if we have seen nothing of life or of men. They are like predigested foods, complete in themselves. With these subjects we are safe. Individuals may have no natural capacity for some of them—some children seem incapable of learning foreign languages, others incapable of any mathematics except the simplest—but these subjects are normally indicated for the young; and these are in fact subjects which the young do study. So far there is no reason to alter our present practice, or to doubt its wisdom.

But there are other subjects in the curriculum than mathematics, languages, science. There are literature, history, and sometimes economics and politics. In them the pupil studies life and human nature, of which he knows so little. Are they to be excluded from the schools, and our education reconstructed accordingly? They are staple foods in our own system, and were so long ago in the schools of Greece. Are they for adults only? Do the boy and the adolescent profit little or nothing from their study, and if so what profit do they get? Clearly they gain much, and I will now try to define the gain.

Studies lead to specific knowledge, but, quite apart from that, they are a training, varying with each subject, in the art of using the mind in kindred fields. A schoolboy, who may know nothing of the realities with which history or literature or politics or economics deal, can get this training from their study; their facts and theories are to him counters with which he learns to use his brain in these and related subjects; to argue a case and weigh evidence, to distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant, to seize the point at issue, to arrange his thoughts and marshal facts to support a theory, to discover when a statement is proved and when it is not, to reason logically and express himself clearly—in fact to play the great game of the intellect; just as soldiers playing a war game in a study with maps and flags—*belli simulacra cientes*—in some degree prepare themselves for the realities of war. All this is

quite independent of any knowledge that the pupil acquires and in a sense is far more important.

The process can be seen in any university among undergraduate students of philosophy, as they play intellectual ping-pong with their tutors with the Absolute for ball. They attach little or no meaning to the tremendous conceptions which the Absolute represents, but their discussions of it may be logically impeccable, and though they may be learning little about the Absolute they are learning how to argue and discuss. They do not realise with what they are playing, but they learn to play the game correctly. Or they may write essays contrasting the English Revolution of 1688 with the French Revolution, and receive an admirable discipline in logic, relevance, order, proportion and the art of expression without ever feeling the living issues as Halifax and Churchill, Danton and Robespierre felt them; and their minds can be developed by these mental exercises, just as their bodies can be developed by physical training, though they may have no idea of the principles of physiology and anatomy on which it is based.

So it is possible for clever schoolboys or undergraduates to profit by studies of which they only see the surface. And they can and do take pleasure in them. They enjoy arguing about a problem of history or economics as an athlete enjoys running; and for similar reasons. They are using powers which they possess and they delight in exercising the quickness

and acuteness and vigour of their minds as an athlete enjoys exercising his nimbleness and speed. It is an excellent and healthy occupation, and on it is founded the saying that education is what remains after we have forgotten all that we have learnt. If anyone studies a subject to any purpose, it improves the quality and powers of his mind for certain cognate uses, even if he remembers little or nothing of it.

What else does a pupil learn by studying history or literature at school? I do not wish to give a dogmatic answer to this question, but only to raise it. It is important that we should all ask and answer it, not dogmatically, not from our own prepossessions and hopes, but by observing the pupil and noting not what he is supposed to get from these studies, but what *in fact* he does get from them. My own tentative answer would be this. The child and the adolescent can learn facts—the date of the Reformation or of the Reform Bill, details of biography and history, the hard skeleton of knowledge. If we pass from knowledge to understanding—so far as the two can be separated—clearly some aspects of literature and history are within the grasp even of children. They can enjoy the music or the sonority of verse and good prose: Swinburne, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the songs in Tennyson's *Princess*, the hexameter of Homer and Virgil, the purple passages of Burke, Ruskin, Macaulay, Froude—the list could be extended indefinitely. They can

enjoy, too, the pictures of literature and history—and how much of both is picture!—because for this appreciation they have the necessary experience, drawn from all that they have seen in city or country or sea since their eyes opened on the world. They can visualise, as clearly as any adult, the Duke of Guise in his satin dress sitting shivering in the fireless ante-room of Henry III eating *prunes de Brignolles*, or the murder of Darnley, or the ships moving up the Foyle to relieve Londonderry, or the Athenians taking their siesta in the afternoon heat on the beach of Aegospotami, unconscious of the Spartan fleet rowing quickly across the Hellespont to surprise them. Something, too, they can grasp of historic characters, so far as these come within the range of their own daydreams and childish ideals and inchoate ambitions.

Further—and even more important—if a child reads great literature or great history, their greatness forms his mind unconsciously. Some touch of their nobility passes on him, and “wins him imperceptibly from earliest childhood into resemblance, love and harmony with the beauty of reason”, of which at the moment he has no rational understanding.

They sink deeply into the recesses of the soul and take a powerful hold of it. . . . He who has been duly brought up therein will have the keenest eye for defects. . . and, feeling a most just contempt for them, will welcome what is beautiful, and gladly receive it into his soul, and feed on it, and grow to be noble and good; and he will rightly reject and hate all that is

ugly, even in his childhood before he has come to the age of reason; and when reason comes, he will welcome her ardently, because this has been his upbringing.¹

So Plato describes that unconscious moulding of mind and character, which is perhaps the chief part of early education. In education, as in life, we are formed by our atmosphere without knowing it. We store up unconsciously spiritual tissue of whose nature and importance we are unaware. Later we may come to know and appreciate the influences that have formed us. For the mind is like a garden. Seeds are scattered on the soil and most are lost, but some lie inert till the outside influence of sun and moisture wakes them to activity. That is a parable of education. It scatters ideas and information on the surface of the mind; much perishes forgotten, but some seeds lie dormant till the quickening power of experience brings them to life. Hence the value of a practice too much neglected in modern education, the habit of learning great literature by heart and so storing up a treasure which later life may enable us to use. It is also an argument for certain criticised methods in religious education. It seems preposterous to teach children doctrines in which the intense thought and deep imagination of great religious thinkers have expressed their sense of the inner meaning of a world of which a child knows almost nothing, and many people would argue that such

¹ Plato, *Republic*, 401 f.

teaching was a mistake. One justification for it is that these seeds lying dormant in the uncomprehending mind will in later years be quickened by experience, and the meaning of what once seemed absurd or meaningless will be revealed. Newbolt puts the point admirably in his poem on Clifton Chapel:

Here, my son,
Your father thought the thoughts of youth,
And heard the words that one by one
The touch of life has turned to truth.

For there is in education a law of delayed action, by which seed sown and long forgotten only grows in late years. Teachers like to see results from their efforts, and direct them accordingly. But the most precious fruits of a good teacher's work are those that he is never likely to see.

I am not trying to banish history and literature and kindred subjects from the education of the young. I am only urging that we should realise the difficulties and limitations—the important limitations—of their study in youth. To learn hard facts; to exercise powers of thought and expression; to store in the memory thoughts and ideas whose fuller meaning life will reveal; to live with models of excellence in life and thought—these are the fruits within the grasp of those who study literature, history and kindred subjects at school. But other fruits of those trees are beyond their reach. What do the great legal, constitutional, political and social issues of history mean to them? If their

minds have retentive surfaces, you can plaster on to them the provisions of the Constitutions of Clarendon or the Bill of Rights, and they will reproduce these with more or less accuracy in an examination paper. But their knowledge of these things will, in Newman's phrase, be notional and not real. Parrots do not know the meaning of the phrases they repeat. Let anyone consult his own experience. We have all probably learnt the Six Points of the Chartists at school. They were plastered on to our minds, but never became part of the fabric, and, unless we have exceptional memories, the plaster has fallen off long ago. Was it ever worth applying? What can children or adolescents *comprehend* of such things? The day may come when they will have lived long enough in the world to perceive the meaning of politics, to have stood beside, perhaps to swim in, these obscure confused currents that sweep the world through political change. Then they will understand. But that day has not dawned at the age of sixteen, or even later.¹

¹ "The study of political science is beyond the capacity, or rather, beyond the range of experience, of the schoolboy. . . . It requires some previous experience of life. Before you can really study the theory of good and evil in ethics, you must have realised, in your own life, the existence of moral problems. Similarly before you can really study the theory of right and wrong in politics, you must have undergone some sort of political experience. . . . you must have wrestled yourself, in some way, with the problems of conduct and organisation which arise in human societies." Prof. E. Barker in *The Citizen's Choice*, p. 150. The same chapter contains some admirable remarks on education for citizenship.

Or take two other subjects, economics and citizenship, which press into the curriculum for obvious reasons. Economics are not among the great ends of civilisation, but they are among its indispensable means. They are foundations of our social order, and if they are unsound it will collapse. Citizenship is equally important, especially in a democracy. It might be otherwise if we lived in a totalitarian State, had leaders who indicated and enforced our duties to it, and did obediently what we are told. But we live in a society where men have a right to their opinions, where co-operation is largely voluntary and private judgement is respected and individual initiative is the chief motive power, and where the collective vote of thirty million voters determines the policy of the State; our machine will not work unless its component humans have some understanding of it, know what citizenship is and are aware that they are citizens. And how many electors are clearly aware even of this! So the educationist says to himself:

Here I have these children, at worst till the age of fourteen, at best to eighteen. Now is my only chance—and theirs. I must not let them escape without some knowledge of elementary economic laws, and a foothold in the vast ill-defined region of citizenship: otherwise disaster is inevitable for them and for the state.

A very plausible argument, but the more dangerous; in it is concealed one of the greatest dangers to educa-

tion. It and similar arguments drawn from the amount of knowledge supposed "necessary to the modern man" are responsible for the overcrowded curriculum which leads to intellectual dyspepsia, hopeless malnutrition, and often to a permanent distaste for knowledge and incapacity to digest it; to the plastering ideas and facts on the surface of the pupil's mind from which they rapidly peel off; to mistaking information, which never becomes an organic part of his experience, for education which is absorbed by his mind and transforms it. The test of a successful education is not the amount of knowledge that a pupil takes away from school, but his appetite to know and his capacity to learn. If the school sends out children with a desire for knowledge and some idea of how to acquire and use it, it will have done its work. Too many leave school with the appetite killed and the mind loaded with undigested lumps of information. The good schoolmaster is known by the number of valuable subjects that he declines to teach.

I am not arguing for the exclusion of citizenship or economics from the school, but urging that we should not be too sanguine about the results of teaching them. They are remote from the experience of the pupil, who is not a citizen and who, especially in well-to-do homes, has no direct contact with the facts which economics tries to rationalise. A well-known Cambridge economist is reported to have said: "What is the use of my talking about economics to young people who do not

know the wages of their gardener at home?" Instruction in such subjects tends to be mere plaster, and in economics at least the school plasterers sometimes apply the wrong material; for it is not an easy subject even for adults.

An attempt is made to give a sense of reality to school teaching of citizenship by imaginary sessions of Parliament or of the League of Nations, and doubtless this mimic politics, like other forms of acting, has some educational value. But no one can suppose that any idea of the atmosphere of Westminster and Geneva is given by reproducing a shadow of their formal proceedings. It may be a pleasant entertainment, but at its end the pupils will have as little sense of all that makes real politics, its vital problems, its personal ambitions, its tension, excitement, bitterness, enthusiasm, as children who dress up as doctors to visit a sick doll learn from their play about the realities of illness. And there is a certain danger that they may suppose themselves to know. In all these subjects it is better to make the pupil aware of them than to give detailed instruction in them. What would take many lessons to teach, they can equally well study for themselves in books. It sometimes seems to be forgotten that people can read after they have left school, and that if a school is unable to teach children to wish to read for themselves, it will be unable to teach them anything else of value. The demand for citizenship and economics will come in

later life, when the pupil has become a citizen and from personal experience realises that there is such a thing as citizenship. The following sentence appears in the report called *The Extra Year*, published by a Joint Committee of the Association of Education Committees and the N.U.T.: "In the senior schools it is the citizenship questions in which the parents shew most interest and themselves provide information and send up questions for answer."¹ That is exactly what one would expect. But how strange that our method of providing the adult with the knowledge of citizenship which he both needs and desires is through lessons given to his fourteen-year-old children in a senior school!

In one of the really good books on education, Professor Whitehead has spoken of the danger of

inert ideas, that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilised or tested or thrown into fresh combinations.... Education with inert ideas is not only useless; it is, above all things, harmful.... Except at rare intervals of intellectual ferment, education in the past has been radically infected with inert ideas. That is why uneducated clever women, who have seen much of the world, are in middle life so much the most cultured part of the community. They have been saved from this horrible burden of inert ideas.²

But the average pupil in the secondary school and university is not saved from the burden. The ideas are

¹ P. 115. ² *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*, p. 1 f.

plastered on to his mind, "without being utilised or tested or thrown into new combinations". They can only be tested by comparing them with life, of which he knows nothing; they can only be thrown into new combinations, if there is something already in his mind with which to combine—and there is not; they cannot be utilised, for only the heat and stress of life gives occasion for their use. Our education is loaded with "inert ideas".

The less intelligent the pupil, the more "inert ideas" there will be, and the more boredom in applying the mind to subjects which are dimly apprehended. Clever boys or girls learn quickly, remember well, and take a pleasure in exercising the brain. They may not—they cannot—really understand the Constitutions of Clarendon or the character of Hamlet; but they may get enjoyment and profit from talking, thinking, and memorising facts, about them. But to take this pleasure one must have, what only a minority of human beings possess, a reasonably good brain. Most people have no more wish to think for thinking's sake than to run a quarter-mile on a track, unless there is some obvious reason for doing it. Running and thinking for mere physical or intellectual exercise do not attract them. Hence the common failures of our education. The clever enjoy learning for its own sake; the mediocre or stupid do not. The latter, if they felt the need of science or mathematics or languages or some other subject for the practical work of life, would have

a motive for study. But their school work is apt to present itself as a tale of bricks demanded by a task-master, or a dreary necessity for an examination. The teacher, an *instans tyrannus*, harries or persuades them and, if he is insistent enough, succeeds in extorting the necessary minimum. The pupils are taught—to some degree—but not educated. Anyone who has been a master in a secondary school knows these pupils; they are even to be found in universities, conscientiously walking in the treadmill or quietly evading it. They do not ardently desire education; some of them do not desire it at all. Youth does not see its uses; life will reveal them and bring the desire; but for this awakening we make no provision.

CHAPTER III

THE WAY OUT

I ARGUED in the preceding chapter that experience of life is necessary for the full and fruitful study of subjects like literature, history, politics and economics; that therefore the cultural education of the young is and must be very incomplete when they leave school and even when they have taken a university degree—not from any fault of their own but because they have very little first-hand knowledge of life: and I suggested that these facts should be borne in mind in devising a national system of education. I now pass to consider our problem. The great mass of the population has no education after the age of 14. How can we educate it?

The obvious answer is—Raise the school age to 15 or 16. But the defects of our present system will not be remedied by this. I am not arguing against the raising of the school age. It may help our economic difficulties by reducing the supply of children in the labour market. It will keep children longer under influences of discipline and guidance with which they can ill dispense at 14. But the value of the raised school age is moral and economic rather than intellectual. The mind will gain something from it. The character will gain more than the mind. But even at 16 intel-

lectual education, in any except a quite elementary sense, is only about to begin. Nobody who has seen the results of compulsory education to the age of 16 in the U.S.A. will be under the delusion that it produces an educated nation. If they compare these results with those obtained in France, where education is compulsory only till the age of 13, and where pupils can leave a year earlier if they obtain the *Certificat des études élémentaires*, they will be still further disillusioned about the intellectual advantages gained by raising the school age.

"Then raise it still further and give secondary education to all." Those who make this suggestion cannot have considered the practical difficulties of such a plan. But if it were financially practicable, it would still be educationally ineffective. Presumably those who speak of secondary education for all are not using the word secondary in its strict sense, but contemplate the development, by the side of strictly secondary schools, of something like the Technical High Schools proposed in the Spens Report, designed for boys with a practical and scientific bent and giving "large opportunities for practical work". But even such schools cannot, and were never intended, to omit the studies called humanistic, of which literature, history and politics are chief—the visions of human life which religion and poetry and thought have conceived, the "study of what man is and what he should pursue", and the record of his achievements in the world. These

studies are indispensable to all men as men and to all citizens as citizens, and a life or an education which ignores them is hopelessly maimed. And yet—if the argument in the preceding chapters is sound—without experience of life they cannot be studied with full profit.

Is our experience of the schools where pupils stay to the age of 17 or 18 so encouraging? With many of their pupils, and within the measure of their possibilities, they achieve their aim. But some of their classrooms present a scene of human nature either evading an unwelcome task, or struggling conscientiously but without enthusiasm with a painful duty. It is education of a sort, but hardly that education of which Milton spoke, whose "incredible diligence and courage, infusing into the young breast such an ingenuous and noble ardour, would not fail to make many of them renowned and matchless men". That, or something as near it as human nature can compass, is what we need: but it is not what we achieve. How many of the pupils in our secondary system would attend school, if they were not compelled? How many learn even to care enough for their studies to continue them in later life? How many carry away such standards as will help them through life to choose the good and reject the bad in literature, the theatre, the films, life?

If this is true at present, what will it be later, if we try to bring into post-primary education the children

who now leave school at 14 or 15? We are apt to speak and think as if our problem were an extension of our present educational system to the masses whom it does not yet reach. More teachers; more schools; and bring the rest of the population into them. But it is not as simple as that. The problem before us in 1900 was to organise and expand an unorganised and inadequate secondary education. The problem to-day is to educate the masses of the nation. Those who at present receive higher education are the better brains of the community. This is not wholly true: there are still able boys and girls who owing to the poverty of their parents or for other reasons have no education after the age of 14. Still the pupils in secondary schools are on the whole the abler children of the country, and the majority of those who never get beyond elementary or central school are less able. This class, which needs education and does not get it, is the problem. To bring these children into the schools will only add to the pupils who at present get least profit from them. We do not succeed too well with those whom we educate now. But new difficulties will confront us when we come to educating those with less ability and weaker powers of memory, imagination and concentration. A large number of our present pupils show little aptitude or interest. It is absurd to employ methods with these weaker brethren which are only partially successful with the stronger ones.

I do not of course ignore the virtues or minimise the

importance of the secondary school, which is the keystone of our higher educational system. It has its advantages and its weaknesses. Economic reasons suggest that the earlier years of life should be given to education. That is the time when the parents are most capable of earning money, and the children least capable of it. Further, it is the best age for learning such subjects as foreign languages, for memorising facts and for tolerating and even enjoying what to an adult is drudgery. Yet I doubt if any candid person, who has been a teacher or a pupil in a secondary school, feels that the returns correspond to the labour, time and money spent. How should they? You are teaching pupils in whom no intellectual faculty except that of memory and possibly imagination is fully developed, who have not, and cannot have, a full perception of the purposes and value of education, and whose eyes—and their teacher's eyes—are apt to be fixed not on its real business, but on School, or Higher, Certificates, or on Matriculation or Scholarships. Some take their educational food with a healthy appetite; others attend conscientiously at meal-times; others are compelled to swallow. But forcible feeding is not education. In every point except the economic one adult education has the advantage over secondary education. It is given to students who desire it, who have the mental development to receive it, and who have the experience of life necessary to value and interpret it; whereas secondary education is given to pupils whose faculties

are not fully developed, and who have not seen enough of life fully to comprehend what education is or what it can do for them. Secondary education will always be necessary for the comparatively small class who are capable of high achievement in mathematics, science, historical or literary study. It is so firmly established in our national system that its position is not likely to be weakened. By its side will grow up the Technical High Schools of the Spens Report, or something like them. But it would be well if we became less confident that the best thing for any boy who can afford it is to stay at school till 18, and if we realised that the education of the masses can never be so achieved.

What, then, should we do? If we lived in Utopia and could reconstruct education without regard either to its past evolution or its present condition or the needs of the practical world, the ideal plan might be for everyone to leave school at 15, and pass into a system, where part of the week was allotted to school, part to earning a living in some practical occupation, the proportions of each varying with the intellectual abilities of the pupil and the demands of the subjects which he was studying. Such a contact with the practical world would both sharpen the appreciation of the value and purpose of education, and, especially in the humanistic subjects, make their real meaning far more intelligible. Theory would be illuminated by practice, and practice by theory. At present the two

are nearly always divorced. We lead a life of action without thought; or we think in a vacuum, without contact with the realities and problems of the world. Neither form of isolation is satisfactory.

A revolution of this kind could be made in a Platonic—or a Communist—state. It is impossible in our own. The small section of the community which proceeds through the secondary school, and thence, reduced in numbers, to a university degree, will continue to follow that beaten path. Their studies will still suffer from ignorance of life. The only possible improvement for them is that some of them may interpose a layer of practical experience between school and university by going into an office or doing some practical job for a period when they leave school. Meanwhile there remains the problem of the greater part of the nation, who in future will leave school at 14 or 15. Unless we establish a compulsory part-time continuation system which will carry them on to 18, the education of the earlier years of the youth of the nation will still be largely wasted. If we can establish such a system, they will remain in contact with those subjects to the rudiments of which their elementary education has introduced them, carrying them on to an age when the mind is growing sufficiently mature to begin to appreciate their value and grasp their meaning. Our next step, therefore, should be to put in force the provisions of the Fisher Act, and retain those who leave school before the age of 18 under some educational control—

not involving whole-time school attendance—to that age. We shall thus escape their abrupt and untimely expulsion from educational influences, and we shall take them to the threshold of adult education, where the solution of our educational problem must be found.

Here we may be met by the objection that we already have adult education, but that it has failed to educate the nation. Much has been talked about it and something has been done. The *Handbook of Adult Education*, or the second volume of Mr Yeaxlee's *Spiritual Values in Adult Education*, or the volumes of *Adult Education*, give an idea of the large number of bodies concerned in it. Its great success in Britain is the Workers' Educational Association, whose history shows what a clear aim, pursued with faith and wisdom, can create in a region without form and void. In 1938-9 there were 66,966 students in W.E.A. classes.¹ The figure is remarkable, till we remember that there are forty-three millions in this island, and that the crowd at a cup tie final is twice as large. The W.E.A. is not to blame for that; nor indeed are the masses. It provided for their intelligentsia, and wisely concentrated on this need, instead of frustrating its own work by pursuing a variety of inconsistent aims, and it has met the needs of a certain class of students so admirably that there is no need to enlarge on its virtues. But necessarily it has left untouched the vast mass of the population. "A liberal estimate gives 500,000 adults at the very

¹ Of these 61,719 were in Grant-earning Classes, the rest in Short Courses and Study Circles.

most as the total influenced in any direct way by any kind of organised educational activity.”¹

Some people think that the majority are not only untouched but untouchable, destined for ever to be the helots of the nation, exiles by nature from all but the outermost court of education, incapable of any humanistic or cultural interest. But this is not so. During the depression Queen’s University, Belfast, organised classes for the unemployed and a professor who was interested in drama asked if anyone would care to act. A number of persons sent in their names; all belonged to what is known as the working class and had left school at 14; with one exception none had acted before. The first play they produced was the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles in translation; the second was Marlowe’s *Dr Faustus*. Difficulties do not discourage Ulstermen, yet it might have seemed a hopeless task for men who had left school at 14; but the success of the performances showed how false was such a view and how completely the ordinary man can rise to the levels of the great masterpieces of literature. And every cottage gives the lie to pessimistic conclusions about his capacities, and proves that the taste for art and poetry is universal. The poorest home has pictures, however cheap, on the walls, and gives thereby proof beyond question that art of some kind appeals to all and that no one feels his life complete without it. Almost everyone enjoys some kind of music, even if

¹ *The Handbook and Directory of Adult Education* (1929), p. 29.

it is only crooning, some kind of poetry, even if it is only a hymn, some kind of pictures, even if they are only cheap prints. Just as a baby's cries show the power of speech, waiting to be developed, so in all humans there is the latent taste for art, literature and music, capable of being trained to understand and enjoy the best. But how can it be done?

The vegetation of a district reveals the capacities of its soil, and we can find our answer by noting some new plants that have recently grown in English earth. Men's and Women's Institutes, Townswomen's Guilds, Community Centres, Unemployed Centres or Clubs, the Rural Music School, the British Drama League were created to satisfy a variety of needs, but all have, or have developed, a cultural side; they include purely humanistic studies, and they have brought them to classes hitherto unreached. These institutions or something like them may provide the education of the masses for which we are looking. Characteristic of them are the Women's Clubs. In 1926 sewing groups were started in the Rhondda Valley among the wives of unemployed miners.¹ Later, in England, and notably in Lancashire and Yorkshire, similar women's clubs sprang up in the cotton and woollen districts. They began with "sewing, renova-

¹ See an article on "Women's Clubs—Adult Education from a new angle", by Helen Roberts (*Adult Education*, x, 4), from which these facts are taken. Closely analogous is the C.C.C.C. (Civilian Conservation Corps Camp) for unemployed in the U.S.A.

tions, thriftcrafts and very simple forms of recreation"—the object being partly to teach self-help, partly to provide some occupation and recreation in distressed areas. Then cookery, home nursing, first aid, personal hygiene and child welfare were added, and led up to "talks on public health services, the functions of maternity clinics, and other aspects of local government". Other subjects crept in. A programme of women's clubs in West Cumberland during the winter of 1937-8 included "dressmaking, handicrafts, weaving, cookery, keep-fit, joinery, drama, choral singing, geography, biology, literature, psychology, European history and foreign affairs". These developments both show the demand for adult education and suggest how it may be met. Their weakness is that, for the most part, the education which they give is casual and episodic, stray lectures or courses of lectures, stimulus rather than education, a cocktail rather than solid food. We need something more systematic and methodical.

Theories are more common than achievements in the history of education. Important and interesting as theories are, for practical purposes achievements are more instructive, since they show what is possible with human nature and in the actual world, and the educationist needs to study them even more than he studies Plato or Comenius or Herbart or Pestalozzi. Now, in the last hundred years there have been four notable achievements in education, great creations

which have embodied an idea, and excited interest and exercised influence far outside the country of their origin. These are the pre-war German University, the English Public School, the Danish People's High School, and the Scout and Guide Movements. Of these the third, the Danish People's High School, should be of peculiar interest to us, for it is the only great successful experiment in educating the masses of a nation. It has reached the very classes for which we have done little or nothing. It has taught them to care for subjects like history and literature which seem remote from the man in the street. It has transformed the country economically, given it a spiritual unity, and produced perhaps the only educated democracy in the world. Here is that rare thing in education—an ideal embodied in fact. It is curious that it has excited comparatively little attention among ourselves who are facing the problem which these Danish schools have solved.¹

We find it difficult to think of Denmark as a poverty-stricken country lacking in energy or enterprise; but such it was in the early nineteenth century, and its transformation into one of the most progressive and prosperous democracies of Europe was largely the work of the education given in these schools. The

¹ There are good accounts of these schools in *The Folk High Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community*, by Begtrup, Lund and Manniche; *Education for Life*, by N. Davies; *Denmark, A Social Laboratory*, by Manniche. See also an article in *The Yearbook of Education*, 1937.

creators of the movement were a clergyman, Grundtvig, and a working cobbler called Kold—strange but most successful fellow-workers. The idea and inspiration came from Grundtvig: Kold, a man of the people, founded schools, taught, and drew men after him by strength of character and spiritual force. The first Danish People's High School was founded by a professor of literature in 1844 to combat German propaganda in Schleswig-Holstein. Others followed. In 1864 came the disastrous war with Germany. The Danish reply to defeat was to create more High Schools. In 1872 there were fifty-four; to-day there are fifty-seven. They are nearly all residential, with a summer term of three months, chiefly for women, and a winter term of five months, chiefly for men. They are private ventures, owned either by the principal or by a number of persons who form a company. The Government gives grants in aid. The pupils are mostly farmers and small-holders and, in a less degree, labourers. All students are over 18; the High School will not take them younger. Only 25 per cent have had anything more than elementary education; the rest have spent the years between 14 and 18 in farming or other work. There is no compulsion to attend, and no reward in the form of a degree or a diploma. The cost of living and education is about £4 per month for women, and a little more for men, and is paid by the student, but the Government offers scholarships which pay half the fees of those who could not afford to

attend without such help. Yet though all the cost in most cases, and half the cost in the rest, falls on the students, it is reckoned that about 30 per cent of the agricultural community attend a High School. This is the more surprising, because they are paying hard cash for something which superficially might seem valueless for a labouring population. Though nearly all the students are and will continue to be workers on the land, there is nothing vocational in the High School curriculum. Its main subjects are literature and history. To these are added composition in Danish, mathematics, elementary science, gymnastics and (for the women) sewing. At the Askov High School the course is longer and more advanced.

My mind's eye still sees one of these High Schools within two days' journey from England. A lane through orchards leads to a large farm-like building in the country—a residential college for the ordinary man and woman. Nothing about it—except its existence—would seem strange in our own country. A few points strike the attention: the pictures on the walls, often by leading artists of the country; the place of community-singing in the curriculum (the song book of this college contained poetry new and old, including a translation of Tennyson's *Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky*); the absence of compulsion, examinations or diplomas—the students study because they wish to travel the road of learning, not to collect academic luggage labels. Such is a People's High School.

Here is a force quite unlike anything in Britain We

have, it is true, residential colleges for adult education, Coleg Harlech, Newbattle, the Woodbrooke Colleges, Avoncroft near Bromsgrove (for agricultural workers), Hillcroft at Surbiton and others. But whereas we have about nine such residential colleges in a country of forty-four and a half millions, Denmark has fifty-seven for a population of three and a half millions. Further the clientèle of our colleges is an intelligentsia, and their studies of a W.E.A. type. Hence, admirable as they are, they could not solve the problem of educating the masses of the nation. We have the W.E.A. But while the W.E.A. in a country with thirteen times the population has some 60,000 students attending evening classes on twenty-four evenings in the year, Denmark has 5802¹ students attending for periods of three to five months continuous study. In Denmark adult education penetrates the whole nation; in this country it touches individuals and small sections.

This Danish national education has three secrets of success: it is given to adults; it is residential; it is essentially a spiritual force. Let us glance at these in turn.

The P.H.S. is a school for adults. The Danes have never attempted to solve the problem of national education by raising the school age, and most Danes

¹ Figures for 1937-8. Of these 2904 were men, 2898 women. The P.H.S. movement has taken root in the other Scandinavian countries. There are 59 Schools in Sweden, 53 in Finland and 32 in Norway.

leave school at 14, resuming their education in the P.H.S. after the age of 18. Grundtvig refused to admit anyone into his schools before that age. This decision was not based merely on theory, but was reached by trial and error. When the P.H.S. started, Kold and Grundtvig, the parents of the movement, disagreed. Kold supported a policy allied to that of the Hadow Report. He wished to have the pupils from 14 to 15, because, as he said, they were then still so far children that they would receive their teacher's instruction with docility. Grundtvig maintained that they should be at least 18 years old, because before that age they were too immature to think about the problems of life. Both methods were tried, and the experiment converted Kold to Grundtvig's view. The younger pupils showed neither the intelligence nor the interest of the elder. "We got people to teach both over and under 18, and then I found out at once that we could do something with those that were 18 and over, while we could do nothing with those that were under 18."¹ Since that day, 18 has been fixed as the lowest age at which the High School can be entered, and no Dane wishes to change the rule. Grundtvig made the discovery that secondary education for all is an easy method of wasting money and time.

The period of boyhood is not the right school-time. Whoever is to profit by learning must first have lived a while and paid heed to life in himself and in others,

¹ Kold, quoted in Davies, *op. cit.* p. 169.

for so only does he get into a position to understand books that describe life.¹

Experience proves that the same amount of information, which it takes the half-grown youth—dozing on the school forms—three to five years to learn, can be acquired by adults, who are keen on learning *and who have done practical work*, in the space of three to five months.²

This sounds optimistic. Yet it has support from the results achieved in Tutorial Classes by students whose early education has been meagre, who in the mine and the factory have had no chances of acquiring the habit of intellectual work, and who bring to their studies a body wearied by a long day of manual labour. But they also bring something which no schoolboy can ever have—a fully grown intelligence, a sense of the value and meaning of education, and that practical experience of life, without which history, literature, and philosophy are lifeless phantoms. For these studies, like the ghosts of the Cimmerian land, need to taste blood before they can speak to us.

A recent English experiment points the same way. In Oxford a student over the age of 23, who has attended an extra-mural Tutorial Class for three years, may be exempted from the University Entrance Examination and be admitted to the status of Senior Student, on his credentials being approved by the proper university bodies. Thus three years formal

¹ Kold, quoted in Davies, *op. cit.* p. 79.

² Begtrup, *op. cit.* p. 132. The italics are mine.

study (consisting of twenty-four two-hour meetings per annum) is counted equal to the years spent at a secondary school by ordinary students. To admit to a university students with such limited preparation is a far more risky experiment than to admit to a P.H.S. students who have left school at 14. Yet the system works. Some at least of such students obtain first and second class honours, though their pre-university education cannot compare with that of the normal undergraduate.

The second feature of the P.H.S. is its residential life. Our adult education is part-time, an hour or two snatched from the routine of life by men and women who have already borne the burden and heat of a day of manual or clerical work. The Dane lays the task of bread-winning aside and lives for three or five months wholly steeped in the atmosphere of education; the dye sinks deeper and takes a more lasting hold. It is like a Summer School which lasts for months instead of weeks, and where the teacher, in continuous touch with his students, comes to know their needs and capacities, can adjust himself to them, and becomes less of a voice lecturing and more of a personality and an influence. Because it is residential, and because the schools are mostly outside the towns, the P.H.S. has another advantage. Contrast the dreary surroundings in which so many W.E.A. classes meet, the bare room taken for an evening in a school or institute or co-operative hall in the crowded streets of a big city, with

the pleasant buildings of a Danish High School, its gardens, pictures, music, and corporate life. The one has every external attraction, the other has none. The more honour to the successes of the W.E.A.! Yet these are not the surroundings in which to pursue knowledge and deepen imagination and see visions and dream dreams of life.

Let our youth live in a healthful land, among beautiful sights and sounds, and absorb good from every side; and beauty streaming from the fair works of art, shall flow into eye and ear, like an air bringing health from a world of health, and insensibly draw the soul into likeness and sympathy with the beauty of Reason.¹

Education is atmosphere as well as instruction; it is not an assemblage of piecemeal acquisitions and accomplishments, but the formation, largely unconscious, of an outlook and an attitude. This truth adult education in Britain has yet to grasp.

Another contrast. Danish adult education is essentially social. That is the meaning of the music. "Stress is not laid upon the method of the singing, the real value of which lies in its power to awaken a feeling of comradeship."² "Every High School is, in a sense, a home."² Such is the effect of the common life. Living together, the pupils learn from each other's views and personalities, from contiguity and personal talk.

¹ Plato, *Republic*, 401.

² Begtrup, *op. cit.* p. 138.

I do not think that we shall succeed in developing adult education unless we make it more social. Even in education man remains a social animal. Consider how often education has burned most brightly at a common hearth, where men gathered together in company to warm their hands at its flame: in antiquity, Socrates in the market-place and gymnasium, the great classical schools of the Academy, the Lyceum, the Stoa, the Museum of Alexandria; in the Middle Ages, the universities, culminating in the residential university, recognised, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, as their ideal form. These examples may teach us something. No doubt the lamp of wisdom can burn in solitary shrines and even in dismal lecture halls. But for the many it will not burn brightly, if at all, unless fanned by that social, corporate life which exists in a residential university and which both educates and makes education attractive.

It is as important, for practical purposes, that education should be attractive as that it should be good. For, unless it is compulsory, one of the great difficulties is to induce people to take it. This sounds cynical; but there are other good things besides education that men do not spontaneously pursue. A minority will follow knowledge for its own sake; but most people need their pudding sweetened. Even more advanced forms of education have their sugar. It is not only the studies and the degree which attract people to Oxford and Cambridge, to Reading and

Exeter;¹ it is their amenities and their common life. The P.H.S. is attractive because it is residential and because the residences are pleasant places. It is the Oxford and Cambridge of the poor man, and the more attractive because for its students the High School course is a rare oasis in a life of hard work and comparative isolation. Hence the importance of the residential element; I doubt whether any voluntary nation-wide system of adult education is possible without it. To attend lectures after a day's work, and regularly, week after week, to leave one's fireside for a room in one of our dismal provincial towns, which is generally much less attractive and comfortable than the local cinema, requires an effort that is only overcome by a real desire for education: and most human beings have a capacity for education, rather than a desire for it.

The third feature of the P.H.S. is equally important. To us adult education is primarily intellectual, a discipline of the intellect, a voyage into new countries of knowledge. To the Danes it is primarily a moral and spiritual force, elevating the mind and strengthening the will by the vision of great ideals. The two aims can never be dissociated; education, however intellectual, must always in some degree affect the outlook and through it character and conduct, for a man's actions

¹ I mention only these among newer universities and university colleges, because, like the P.H.S., they are largely residential.

depend partly on what he knows of life and sees in it; nor are ideals worth much unless they are based on and reinforced by knowledge. But the intellectual or the spiritual element predominates, according as we study in order to know or in order to act. The emphasis of the P.H.S. is on the latter. Its origin impressed this tradition on it. Adult education in England began with the desire to combat intellectual poverty, to open the treasures of knowledge to classes excluded from them. But the first Danish P.H.S. was founded with the political and practical end of fortifying Denmark against German aggression by insistence on Danish culture, achievements and ideals. That issue passed, but the aim of forming the outlook and personality of the student through an ideal has persisted. The P.H.S. is not a church (though many of its teachers were theological students at the university¹), but it fulfils for its students something of the offices of a church by steadily insisting on a spiritual philosophy of life suited to the needs and capacities of the ordinary man. Its pupils learn something more than history and literature and some elementary mathematics and biology. They learn a way and view of life. Spiritual inspiration has been the heart of the schools since their origin. Christian Kold, the labouring shoemaker's son, who did so much to create the high school movement,

¹ Recently 89 of the 253 teachers in People's High Schools had degrees and 53 of these were degrees in theology.

taught the young people that one can be noble-minded, even though one milks the cows or clears away the dung. He scoffed at the "progress" which revealed itself in extravagant clothes and superficial amusements. There is, indeed, an essential difference between the ordinary democracy that aims at the attainment of a culture in mere material things and the democracy of the high schools, which strives to unite plain customs and a simple, frugal life with a genuine culture of the mind and heart.¹

This idealism has its practical uses. In the second half of the nineteenth century Denmark, with no economic advantages, passed from depression to prosperity and became a pioneer and model of agricultural methods. The regeneration of a people is worth study, and this instance is of special interest to educationists, for it is generally agreed that the People's High School was one of the chief instruments in the economic progress of Denmark. And yet the schools seemed useless for such a purpose; they were in no sense agricultural colleges; they gave no vocational courses and their backbone was the study of history and literature. How strange that such subjects should produce better farming! That is the natural criticism to make and our readiness to make it explains why the results of education are so often disappointing. We give knowledge to our pupils and are surprised that some do not want it and that many others make a half-hearted use of it. Our error is that we have given

¹ Begtrup, *op. cit.* p. 102.

them the food and do not trouble about the appetite without which they will not digest it. Our education, like our civilisation, is penetrated with an unintelligent utilitarianism, which makes us feel that we ought to be studying something "useful"—economics, administration, modern languages, technology, etc. No one would question the indispensability of such subjects, but the prior task of education is to inspire, and to give a sense of values and the power of distinguishing in life, as in lesser things, what is first-rate from what is not. That truth, often hidden from the wise and prudent, the makers of the P.H.S. divined. They did not teach their pupils how to farm well but they produced in them a passionate desire to do it. Their aim was not to impart knowledge but to awaken intelligence and idealism. "When they come to us, they are sleeping", said the Principal of a High School to the writer: "it is no use teaching them while they are asleep. We try to go to the centre, to arouse the spirit—the rest will follow."

What is most important, is not the amount of knowledge the students acquire, but the fact that the young people get mentally and emotionally roused. They may forget a deal of the instruction; but they leave the schools different people, having learnt to hear, to see, to think, and to use their powers.¹

Nor is it only intelligence which these schools quicken. They

¹ Begtrup, *op. cit.* p. 38.

awakened in young men and women a yearning for knowledge and a desire to work; the character of the pupils was strengthened, and they left the schools with a much enlarged outlook on life. To satisfy its yearning for knowledge a current of youth flowed from the Folk High Schools to the agriculture schools, and when it afterwards passed out into life it did so with a strong feeling of fellowship, and a desire to work for common progress. Youth thus gained some of the qualifications necessary to the success of a co-operative movement.¹

For this purpose they found an instrument in history and literature taught as Ruskin or Carlyle might have taught them,² so that their pupils learnt to know the great visions of the human mind and the attempts of men to achieve them, and went back to their work with an example and an inspiration. This did not exclude technical education. Denmark has agricultural and dairy Schools, and they are widely attended. But the P.H.S. came first and supplied the driving power. First the desire for knowledge and the inspiration to seek it: then the knowledge. So the Danes avoided the great defects of our civilisation, lack of aim and driving power. The world is full of admirable machinery, from the League of Nations downwards, which is useless because there is not the idealism or the inspiration to move it. Ideals will create machinery: machinery without ideals rusts into decay.

¹ *Ib.* p. 48. The "agriculture schools" are institutions for technical training in agriculture. The high school avoids anything vocational.

² See pp. 75 ff.

The P.H.S. has influenced Denmark in three ways—individual, economic, political. It has enriched countless human beings, awakening their intelligence, enlarging their interests, deepening their outlook on life. Of how many Englishmen can it be said that

Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll!

If they had been born Danes, they would have been more fortunate. But the schools have done much more than educate individuals. They have, as we have seen, turned Denmark from a depressed country into the most successful farming community in Europe. They roused intelligence and inspired idealism; and these sought for knowledge and applied it. Further, they made possible the co-operative system on which Danish agricultural prosperity so largely depends. In British farming the co-operative movement has been a failure: mistrust of one's neighbour and individual selfishness have been too much for it. The P.H.S. is an antidote to these vices. It is easy for men to trust each other when they have lived and worked together for months under one roof; the suspicion based on ignorance melts away. The individual becomes part of a larger pattern, and a spirit grows up which checks selfishness, encourages men to feel themselves members of a community, and makes co-operation not only possible but natural.

But besides educating individuals and transforming the economic life of a country, the P.H.S. has had a deep influence on politics. "The Danish peasantry at the beginning of the nineteenth century was an underclass. In sullen resignation it spent its life in dependence on estate owners and government officials. . . . In the course of a century this underclass has been changed into a well-to-do middle class which, politically and socially, now takes the lead among the Danish people."¹ This transformed peasantry became during the last century the progressive party in Denmark. It seems strange to us who expect a farming population to be conservative in politics and do not expect to find them on the Left. Again we see the influence of the P.H.S., binding people together through a corporate life, developing a sense of social equality, giving them an inspiration and the sense of a great human ideal, so that social change comes, and comes not as an economic class-war of a materialist type, with the attendant evils of immediate brutality and ultimate spiritual barrenness, but as a deliberate movement towards a higher life for men. The P.H.S. not only inspired a new order, but gave it a soul. Here it has lessons for the world on which it is needless to dwell.

The P.H.S. has achieved the task of educating a nation. Can we use its methods to solve our problem?

¹ Begtrup, *op. cit.* p. 32. In 1901 30 per cent of the members of the Danish Parliament had passed through the P.H.S.

Is something of the sort possible here? There is no difficulty in learning a lesson from two of its features: we too could base national education not on adolescent, but on adult, study; we too could make it a spiritual force, awakening and inspiring. Nothing in our circumstances makes this impossible. The difficulty arises with the residential element which, as we have seen, is a most important element of the P.H.S. (though the schools at Copenhagen and Esbjerg are not residential). Are residential colleges for adult education possible on a large scale in Britain? Conditions here and in Denmark are very different. Denmark is predominantly agricultural, England is industrial, and it is easier for a farmer or peasant to leave his work during the slack season in winter than for a clerk or factory operative to throw up his job for five months and run the risk of losing it permanently. Even in Denmark the P.H.S. has made little progress in the towns, and only 10 per cent of its students come from them. And not only is the town-dweller more tied to his work than the countryman, but he has at his door cheap amusements which compete with the P.H.S., require no sacrifice and can be enjoyed without mental effort. But education requires sacrifice and effort; those who seek it must give in order to receive, and receive in proportion to what they give. Could anything equivalent to the P.H.S. be established in this land of cities on a scale sufficient seriously to influence national life?

Only experience can answer that question, but it would be a mistake to despond. There are classes in Britain which could attend a residential college without finding themselves unemployed when they left it. Domestic servants for instance (the first Danish P.H.S. student whom I met was in service in England, and had gone home to Denmark to take a course before returning to her work). Our Government and municipalities could, if they wished, arrange to release their employees for a period. Also there are in Britain, as well as in Denmark, farmers and small-holders and farm labourers. It is sometimes said that the severer winter of the north restricts agricultural work and makes it easier to leave it for five months. But farm work does not cease in the cold weather in Denmark. It is a dairying, egg- and bacon-producing country, and cows do not milk themselves, nor do hens and pigs hibernate unfed during the winter months. Difficulties exist in Denmark too, but they are overcome, because people wish to overcome them. Consider too another point. When compulsory military service was introduced in these islands before the war, men had to leave their employment to perform it; a sacrifice actually made for military needs could also be made for other purposes, if we came to believe that education was no less important than readiness for war. If we do not believe that, we are unlikely to make a sacrifice. But it will be made, if the faith and driving force is there, and we must blame failure not on our circumstances

but on ourselves. Whence shall we get the driving force?

In Britain we cannot rely on the motive that brought the P.H.S. into being. It is one of the paradoxes of history that this great educational achievement sprang not from any disinterested love of education, but from the wish to resist Germanisation and to keep the Danish language and culture alive in Schleswig in the early forties of the nineteenth century. Nationalism has never produced a nobler child, and as the P.H.S. matured, it outgrew the immediate needs that created it and shed the accidents of time and place. Propaganda became education: self-assertion passed into self-development, and the High School made not merely Danes but men. Starting from national history and literature, it has reached out into the wider history of mankind. Its students come not to maintain Danish culture but to get education, and it is established so firmly in the national tradition that Danes in the classes for which it is designed have come to regard a course at a High School much as good Moslems regard a pilgrimage to Mecca—as part of the routine of a normal life.

We have yet to create such a tradition, and we cannot find an inspiration in nationalism. Our motive must be different and we might take for our motto the saying of Marcus Aurelius: "The poet cries 'Dear city of Cecrops'; canst thou not say 'Dear city of God'?" If patriotism and the desire to preserve the traditions

and character of a nation can call forth the energy and determination that created these schools, are there not other motives, even more potent, to inspire them? We have to build up in England a society, where each individual, within the measure of his powers, can make the most of body, character and mind. That is an ideal as inspiring as the wish to resist German penetration.

"At Rödning School", said Kold, "they work for Danish culture against German culture, and when the former is triumphant, the task of that school will have passed; at Hindholm they work for the rights of the peasants, and when the peasants have gained the upper hand, there will be no further use for Hindholm High School. But in my school we work for Life as against Death, and that work must continue as long as the world exists."¹

An extension of adult education might come in different ways. Private enterprise may found and endow colleges, as Coleg Harlech and Newbattle and Woodbrooke were founded; but that can only be on a limited scale, and the trend of politics and the financial effects of the war will reduce the number of pious benefactors. Or adult education, instead of being created from above, may grow up from below, as Women's Institutes and Women's Clubs, starting with quite different objects, have developed into an agency of informal education, and may further develop resi-

¹ Davies, *op. cit.* p. 119.

dential colleges of the Danish type. Or the State and Local Education Authorities may come to realise that without adult education the national educational system is incomplete and largely ineffective, and may take its provision seriously in hand.¹ Nothing can be done methodically, thoroughly and on a large scale until they awake to their opportunity and their duty. In the past their hands have been full with prior needs; with the creation of a primary and post-primary educational system, with the developments indicated by the Hadow and Spens Reports. Next presumably will come compulsory part-time education for all, long overdue and urgently required. That reform will force adult education into immediate view and make it easier to achieve. Keep people in contact with education to 18, and they are more likely to wish to continue or resume it later; and they will find it less difficult to do so. The P.H.S. has suffered because nearly all its pupils had left school at 14, and were resuming academic work after being out of contact with it for four years or longer. Part-time education to 18 will keep alive the habit of book learning, and the student at an adult school will no longer find himself among tools whose

¹ "While it is well that the thoughts of school men should be bent upon improving the education of children, an exclusive preoccupation on this point is undesirable, for without a concomitant or integrated program of adult education, the total public educational program must continue to be largely ineffective." *Adult Education* (Regents' Inquiry Publication, New York State, 1938), p. 126.

use he has almost forgotten. While our future educational development thus automatically brings adult education into the foreground, economic conditions give an exceptional chance for its development on residential lines. There will be no need to build colleges. All over the country great houses will be vacant, calling for occupation, purchasable for a song. Why should not each Local Educational Authority start its own House of Education? It need not follow the exact lines of the P.H.S., if that is found impracticable. It might be used for week-ends, or for weeks, of study, for educational or other conferences. Out of small beginnings great developments might grow.

CHAPTER IV

CULTURAL STUDIES IN ADULT EDUCATION

EDUCATION. But what education? The question might have been easier to answer in the age of a restricted curriculum than to-day, when art, folk-dancing, choral-singing, drama, handicrafts, health subjects and much more have taken their place with the older studies. Education is like a restaurant which used to offer a few old-fashioned dishes and now has a menu covering several pages. There are great advantages in this; the enlargement in the scope of education, the sense that it covers the whole of life, is all to the good. But there is a certain risk. For the bill of fare in these restaurants of education is not divided into any categories or courses. Soup, fish, entrées, joints, sweets, dessert are flung together in indiscriminate disorder; the customer selects but there is nothing to guide his selection, nor any suggestion that in education too there are such things as food values and order in a meal. This is a mistake. The days of widespread famine and starving intellectual appetites may still be with us to explain and excuse our indiscriminate feeding; but as famine gives way to a world in which there is food enough for all, it is desirable that we

should consider whether adult education should not be more methodical than it is. But what method, and based on what?

Seen in its many manifestations, education seems an infinite number of topics, classes, techniques, standards, examinations—a Many in which no One can be discerned. That is one reason why there is so much waste in it. We enter this maze with high hopes but no clear purpose and the deeper we plunge into it the more we lose any sense of direction, till we end by following our particular alley, blindly conscientious, through an *inextricabilis error* in which we have long ceased to look for a clue. Perhaps this is an unfair description of education, but most people who have taught or learnt will know what I mean by describing it as a maze without a clue. Yet there *are* clues to the maze. One clue is the old conception of a liberal education.

What is a liberal education? Most people would probably reply,

Subjects like history, literature, languages, pure mathematics and science are a liberal education, but subjects like book-keeping, business administration, commercial French, accountancy, cooking and shorthand are not. They are technical or vocational, not liberal.

So far as it goes, that answer would be true. But why are some subjects classed as liberal education and

others not? In itself liberal education is an odd phrase. What has the adjective "liberal" to do with education, and why should a "liberal" education be regarded as a good thing? To answer that question, we must go back to the country where the phrase "liberal education" was first used. The word "liberal", "belonging to a free man", comes from a world where slavery existed, and has survived into times when, in the literal sense, it has no meaning because there are no slaves. To understand it, we must imagine ourselves in the Greek world where the great distinction was between free men and slaves, and a liberal education was the education fitted to a free citizen.

That distinction may seem obsolete in a world where slavery has been abolished. But though slavery has gone, the ideal of a free man's education is not antiquated. Here, as so often, the Greeks saw to the heart of the matter and put their fingers on an essential distinction. If we had understood and remembered this idea of a free man's education, our views of education would have been less confused and we should have gone straighter to our goal. Of slaves the Greeks took little account. Their condition prevented them from being men in the full sense of the word. But they held that the free man, the real man, the complete man, must be something more than a mere breadwinner, and must have something besides the knowledge necessary to earn his living. He must have also the education which will give him the chance

of developing the gifts and faculties of human nature and becoming a full human being. They saw clearly that men were breadwinners but also that they were, or ought to be, something more: that a man might be a doctor or a lawyer or a shopkeeper or an artisan or a clerk, but that he was also a man, and that education should recognise this and help each individual to become, so far as his capacities allowed, what a man ought to be. That was the meaning of a liberal education, and that is its aim—the making of men; and clearly it is different from a technical education which simply enables us to earn our bread, but does not make us complete human beings.

And what is a complete human being? Again I shall take the Greek answer to this question. Human beings have bodies, minds and characters. Each of these is capable of what the Greeks called “virtue” (*ἀρετή*) or what we might call “excellence”. The virtue or excellence of the body is health and fitness and strength, the firm and sensitive hand, the clear eye; the excellence of the mind is to know and to understand and to think, to have some idea of what the world is and of what man has done and has been and can be; the excellence of the character lies in the great virtues. This trinity of body, mind and character is man: man’s aim, besides earning his living, is to make the most of all three, to have as good a mind, body and character as possible; and a liberal education, a free man’s education, is to help him to this; not because a sound

body, mind and character help to success, or even because they help to happiness, but because they are good things in themselves, and because what is good is worth while, simply because it is good. So we get that clear and important distinction between technical education which aims at earning a living or making money or at some narrowly practical skill, and the free man's education which aims at producing as perfect and complete a human being as may be.

This is not to despise technical education which is essential; everyone has to learn to make a living and to do his job, and he cannot do it without training: technical or vocational education is as much wanted as liberal education. But they are not to be confused. They are both important, both necessary, but they are different. And yet to some extent they overlap. Take French. A man may study it in order to be able to order his meals in a French restaurant, or for business purposes; then it is technical education. He, *as a man*, is no better for being able to talk to a French waiter, or to order goods in the French language. But he may study French to extend his knowledge of the thoughts and history and civilisation of a great people; then it is liberal education. He, *as a man*, is more complete for that knowledge. Or take carpentering: its study may be a means to a living or to making furniture or boats or other objects; then it is technical education. But it may also give a clearer eye, a finer sense of touch, a more deft hand, and in so far make a better human

being; then carpentering is liberal education. Or take Greek: it may be studied in order to get access to the wisdom and beauty of Greek literature; then it is liberal education. Or its student may have no interest in these things, but simply be taking it in order to get an extra credit in the School Certificate; then it is technical education—if it is anything. In fact as Aristotle remarked, “in education it makes all the difference *why* a man does or learns anything; if he studies it for the sake of his own development or with a view to excellence it is liberal”.¹

This is the kind of education (without prejudice to others) which we want—that people should study “for the sake of their own development or with a view to excellence”, so that they may become human beings in the Greek meaning of the words, and not remain mere business men, mere chemists or physicists, mere clerks, mere artisans or labourers. If so, we have a clue to the maze of education, a guide to choosing dishes from the educational menu. Whatever else we select to meet our personal tastes or needs, the dinner must include the vitamins necessary to human health, so that we achieve that liberal education which makes men fully developed, within the range of their individual capacities, in body, character and mind.

I shall only attempt to deal with a certain aspect of the liberal education of the mind (not that in practice it can be cut off cleanly from the other two). Here we

¹ *Politics*, viii, 2, 6.

enter an enormous field—that vast complex of related and unrelated subjects which fills the lecture lists of all the universities and the shelves of the libraries of the world. This is the food which the intellect produces and on which in turn it feeds. Yet this bewildering variety can be reduced under two heads—the study of the material universe, and the study of man as a sentient, thinking and spiritual being. The first of these consists in the sciences which study and attempt to explain the material universe through Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Geology, Geography, and those which study man regarded as a physical phenomenon through Anatomy, Biology, and the rest. Only scientists are competent to deal with the difficult problem of teaching these to the ordinary man. The elements of different sciences can be taught—thus biology and chemistry are taught in the Danish People's High Schools—but it is even more desirable to bring home to the student the meaning and importance of science in human life. That perhaps can best be done, historically by a description of the growth of science, and biographically by some account of great men of science, their personalities and their work. This brings us to the second great branch of knowledge, of which it is a part and which is usually called Humanism. Its subject is Man—man, viewed in himself and his proper nature, viewed as literature views him, as a being with feelings and prejudices, virtues and vices, ruled by intellect, or perverted by

passion, inspired by ideals, torn by desires, acting on plan and calculation or carried away by unreflecting emotion, sacrificing his life now for gold and now for an idea, an adulterer, a patriot, a glutton, a dreamer, Ægisthus, Œdipus, Hamlet, Macbeth, Faust—or man, viewed as a being governed by the laws of a universe outside him, viewed as philosophy views him, subject to limitations of time and space, of his own origin, nature and destiny, related to beings and forces outside him, adapting himself to those relations and modifying his action according to his conception of them, a creature with moral capacities or the descendant of an ape, determining his character and his future according to his wishes, or merely one wheel among many millions blindly revolving in a great machine: or, thirdly, man viewed as a political and social being, as history views him, creating states and overthrowing them, making laws and refusing to be bound by them, opposing religion to politics, and freedom to law, binding art and politics, empire and freedom, public and private life into one harmonious whole, or crowning one to the exclusion of the rest, fighting, colonising, making money and spending it, treating his neighbour as a fellow-being, or using him as a tool for the production of wealth, monarchist, parliamentarian, socialist, anarchist, Pericles or Augustus, Cromwell or Robespierre. Before the student of literature, philosophy, and history are displayed *all* the forces and ideas that have governed man, personal,

religious, or political; to see why he has rejected this and espoused that, why this failed and that was successful, what are liberty and religion, family affection and personal greed, and, in a word, to study man. As he reviews them and compares them with the present, he can see, as far as a man can see, what ideas have come down to his own day, and what new elements are combining with them, can forecast in some degree the future, and by virtue of his knowledge guide the streaming forces, and shape the molten mass, serve his country and use to the best advantage his own powers.

Merely to define history and literature is to prove that they are essential parts of every man's education. Yet to the majority of the population they are closed books. Mention poetry to the average man and he will think you slightly eccentric. It means nothing to him and has no message to him. History will sound less remote to his ears, but he will know no more of it than he may happen to remember from his days at an elementary school. How is he to be interested in these two essential subjects? If he belongs to the W.E.A. type of student, there is no difficulty; that problem is already solved. But there is a great difficulty, if he is on a different intellectual level—and it is this type of student who must be considered if we are to have an educated nation and not merely a nation of which a minority has been educated. A walk through the poor quarters of any town and a glance at the faces

of its inhabitants will remind us of the folly of treating everybody as though they were intelligentsia or even intelligent, or of supposing that methods which succeed with the few will succeed with the many. One might well despair if this problem too had not also been solved. Here again we can learn from the Danish People's High School, where history and literature are not merely subjects in the curriculum, but the basis of education, and have been made familiar and fascinating subjects to the very classes with whom we are concerned. But they are taught by different methods from those which we employ.

Contrast with characteristic lectures on a W.E.A. syllabus a typical lecture of the P.H.S.¹ The choice of the subject—Alexander the Great—and its treatment are both significant of the difference between the two. The lecturer contrasts the vigour of Alexander with the exhaustion of vital force in contemporary Greece; he shows how, unlike Goth and Hun, Alexander was civiliser as well as conqueror, and, attributing the idealist in him to his tutor Aristotle, urges that the true teacher develops the mind without weakening the character; next he describes a Danish poem on the meeting of a Brahman and the king, dealing with the corruption of Alexander's character by oriental influences, and ends with the moral that the greatness of men depends on their view of good and their desire to achieve it. Here, clearly, we are in a different world

¹ *L'École Supérieure Populaire en Danemark*, by Monnet, p. 31 f.

from the W.E.A.—a world of the pulpit rather than the lecture room—and the intellectual will say that this is not education at all.

Yet perhaps the Danes are right. Intellectual study has two sides. There is the advancement of knowledge and the ascertainment of truth, mostly a matter of minute investigation, whose results fill scientific journals and learned literature. If it is neglected, facts are not known, truth is ignored, and the world mistakes meteors for fixed stars and will-of-the-wisps for a steady light. Besides, such study has a value of its own, as an exercise of one of the great human faculties—the intellect putting forth all its powers and subject to the rule of truth. But there is another side to study, equally honourable and at least as important. Knowledge once found, it remains to use it. Education is a handmaid of the art of living, and to conceive it otherwise is to reduce it to a mere activity of the intelligence. We proceed from pure science to science applied in the service of man, from pure history and literature to their use as repositories of wisdom and guides to life. English literature is the contents of innumerable books and the subject of the *Cambridge History of English Literature* in fifteen volumes. But it is also the record of visions of life, seen by men with rare powers of sight and expression, from whose experience we can learn; as we can also learn from that record of human success and failure which is called history.

This view of history as a help to life has a respectable ancestry. The historian of Rome wrote

The study of history is particularly salutary and fruitful because in it you can see, in a brilliant record, illustrations of every possible type, and from it you can take, for yourself and your state, examples to imitate and others, disgraceful in their origin and issue, to avoid.¹

But, long before Livy, one of the great histories of the world had been written from this angle and with this aim, and so had become the heritage and school of a whole people. "Now all these things", says St Paul, speaking of events of Jewish history, "happened under them for examples; and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come."² So, simply and almost crudely, the apostle describes the uses of history. And in this spirit the Old Testament was written. Hence it was, and is, as fascinating to the child as to the adult, to the uneducated and even the illiterate as to the scholar. Its writers knew one side of history, the art of telling a story, and the mere narrative attracts any reader—the excitement of the stories of Saul and David, of the deaths of Jezebel and Ahab, of the wanderings of the patriarchs. But the Bible is a philosophy of history, as well as a collection of stories, and in general, if not in detail, it is the best philosophy yet written for the

¹ Livy, *Preface*, 10.

² 1 Cor. x. 11.

ordinary man. It is significant that no history has ever entered so deeply into the common mind or affected human conduct so strongly as the history of the Jewish people, as conceived and written by the writers of the Bible.

Unless they are taught from this aspect, history and literature will never reach the masses in England. That does not involve biased interpretation or distortion of the truth. But, whatever other things it may be, history is fundamentally the record of human beliefs and actions, folly and wisdom, disaster and success. The researches which appeal to scholars and students do not interest and only indirectly concern the ordinary man, and to teach these subjects to him as they are taught in universities or in the higher forms of schools is like talking a foreign language to people who neither know it, nor have the wish or need to understand it. They are not concerned with scholarship and cannot be reached through it. The most brilliant teacher is not likely to interest them in Alexander's use of cavalry or even his administrative methods in Persia. But all human beings are interested in the problem of how to live, and history will have a meaning for the ordinary man if he sees in it the faces of human beings engaged in the common struggle of humanity towards better things.

The same is true of literature and of its fine flower, poetry. Here too there is a right and wrong angle of approach: there are aspects that concern everyone and

others that do not. Recently at a London settlement lectures were given on Twentieth-Century Poetry by a well-qualified university graduate. They were good lectures in themselves—for Extension or W.E.A. students—but the hearers dwindled and the unsuitability of poetry for the particular audience was apparently demonstrated. Then a working-man, with none of the qualifications of the lecturer but with a gift for reading poetry, tried the experiment of reading it, without comment, to the same audience. And, so long as he read, poetry reading remained a popular entertainment in that Settlement. The story is instructive. The ordinary man is not primarily interested in literary criticism; but he may be interested in poetry—that is, in what interested the poet. The history of literature and most of the contents of annotated editions or works of criticism have little or no meaning for him. Unfortunately it is from this angle that most teachers, trained in universities, tend to approach literature; and this may explain why the hungry sheep are not fed and do not even look up. The academic approach to poetry is a stony and repellent road for the man in the street.

Yet interest in literature is clearly natural and universal. Children—quite young ones—read. If you ask them why they like reading, you will get no satisfactory answer. But the answer is that a child lives in a little world; little in space—a certain house, in a certain part of a town; a world thinly populated by

parents, brothers, sisters, a few grown-ups and other children. Reading enlarges this world enormously, taking the child into a much larger world with a much larger population; kings and queens, princesses and princes, pirates and robbers and giants, other children and other grown-ups and all their ways and lives and adventures. That is why nearly all children enjoy reading; it enlarges their world. And it is always interesting to get into a larger world.

That interest does not cease in adult life,¹ otherwise the cinemas, which minister to it, would be empty. And it is through this instinct and interest that the ordinary man can be drawn on to poetry, to other forms of literature and to history. They enlarge his world and enable him to travel through all the kingdoms of the human mind. Literature is a railway ticket, costing very little, that takes men to every country in the world, a pass that admits to the greatest of waxwork exhibitions, where every waxwork is made of flesh and blood. Do you wish to meet more, and more interesting, human beings than most people meet in a lifetime? Take the plays of Shakespeare from your shelf. Do you wish to visit the hills near Sorrento? Read Browning's *Englishman in Italy*. Or to see a famous view over the Lombard Plain? Read

¹ In America it has been noticed that in adult education cultural subjects appeal especially to older persons, vocational studies to "youth or young adults". *Adult Education* (Regents' Inquiry Publication, 1938), p. 116.

Shelley's *Lines on the Euganean Hills*. The visit can be made from an armchair; and besides seeing Italy, you will be seeing it with the eyes of a poet. We are on a hill top, with rooks gathering at sunrise and flying away to their feeding grounds; the green plain of Lombardy is below, and in the distance the sea with the sun rising red above its waves, and the domes and towers of Venice; and so the poem takes us through its succession of sights and moods and thoughts. Nothing except actual travel can give us such an experience, and even travel cannot give it. For we should see the scene then with our own dull eyes. But reading the poem we view it through the eyes of genius and see and feel what Shelley saw and felt in October 1818.

Literature is desirable—to enlarge experience. It is necessary—to interpret it; to do what few, if any, can do unaided by themselves—penetrate below the surface of phenomena to their inner and real meaning. Poetry, supposed to be “highbrow” and remote, deals for the most part with the world of everyday. Its subjects are ordinary things seen by people who are not ordinary. A caged thrush in a town street, a great city seen at dawn, daffodils growing by a lake, a church, sleeplessness, blindness, a man cabling to his wife and then crossing the Atlantic;¹ none of these are outside

¹ Wordsworth: *The Reverie of Poor Susan*; *Composed upon Westminster Bridge*; *The Daffodils*; *Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge*; *To Sleep*. Milton: *On his Blindness*. Rudyard Kipling: *The Miracles*.

the normal experience of everyone. Or take the famous speech of Macbeth:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

The speaker is called Macbeth, King of Scotland. But he is also anyone who has desired something, and sold his soul to get it, and finds the result disappointing. The type is familiar, though most of its representatives have pursued smaller ambitions by more innocent means than Macbeth, and none of them are masters of Shakespeare's rich imagery. Otherwise they might describe their sense of disappointment and failure in Macbeth's words, and say that life seemed a dismal and interminable procession, and that men are fools walking along a dusty road which leads to death, passing shadows, bad actors who make a brief appearance on the stage, madmen ranting loudly and meaninglessly.

Most people are shortsighted; the poet has long sight, and, where others see nothing or vague uncertain shapes, he sees life with vivid colours and sharp outlines, and enables us to see it too. That is the

deepest value of poetry. We may enjoy the music or richness of its language; but its essential virtue is its revealing power. Without poetry we are more than half blind. If anyone doubts this, let him take the subjects of poems given above, think what they suggest to him, then read the poems, and ask himself if he has gained nothing. It is a gain in pleasure and appreciation: we see more in daffodils or a great church or a sleeping city after we have read Wordsworth's poems on them, and in so far we enjoy our experiences more intensely and get more out of life. But it brings a further gain—a deeper insight into life. Let anyone read the sonnets of Wordsworth written during the Napoleonic war and expressing the poet's feeling about it—"It is not to be thought of that the Flood"; "Thesetimes touch monied Worldlings with despair"; "Another year! another deadly blow!" and then ask himself whether they do not interpret the issues and atmosphere of such struggles and suggest the attitude in which to face them, better than the best speeches of politicians. That is what poetry does for its readers with every subject that it touches. It paints scenes on the walls of their minds that would otherwise be bare. But it also illuminates ordinary things and, like the sun in nature, suddenly fills with warmth and colour a world which was obscure and dark. To go through life without seeing it as the poets see it is to see little of it. Certainly it is not to see it in its truest light. There are many interpretations of life and its pheno-

mena. Take for instance sex and love; Casanova saw one thing in them, Dante saw something different. Or take the scene which Shelley viewed from the Euganean Hills. A geologist would see in it certain conformations of strata, a farmer soil suitable for certain crops, an industrialist possibilities of industrial development, a historian the sites of cultures or of battles, a poet—what Shelley saw. All these interpretations of the scene are valid, yet they differ in value; the gamut runs up the scale from low notes to high; and the mark of the poet is that he interprets life more generally, more disinterestedly, more for itself and in itself, more in its permanent, and less in its fleeting, aspects, than other men. Human progress depends chiefly on what men see in life, and how they interpret it; and the ages in which the world has moved forward are those rare ages when men of religious or poetic or intellectual genius have caught sight of levels higher than those in which the world is moving. Where there is no vision, the people perish. The climax of the ruin of Zion is when “her prophets find no vision from the Lord”.¹ Poetry is vision, and, at its best, “vision from the Lord”.

That is why it must find a place in the education of every human being. All the science and technology in the world will not take its place; for their uses are different. Poetry, with religion to which it is closely allied, is the great source of the higher interpretations

¹ Lamentations ii. 9.

of the phenomena among which we live. The saying "I can live for three days without food but not without poetry" sounds absurd but is sense.

Adult education rightly conceived might do something to meet the most serious danger to our civilisation. The only force which in the past supplied the ordinary Englishman with clear standards and a view of life has lost much of its influence. Fifty years ago nearly everyone through readings from the Bible, in prayers, and sometimes in sermons heard once a week a great philosophy of life expounded. Much of the seed fell on stony places, much among thorns, yet, whatever the defects of ministers and congregations, it was something to have listened, even with half-shut ears, to the sacred book of the purest and greatest of religions, and the hearers learnt, if not to speak, at least to understand, a common language in thought and conduct.

The loss might not be so serious if some even partly adequate substitute had taken its place. As it is, we are far worse off for spiritual guidance than the Graeco-Roman world, which had its great popular philosophies, Cynic missionaries for the crowd, Stoics and Epicureans for the educated, preaching a rule of life. But the popular ancient philosophies were thrown out of work by Christianity, and we have no sort of substitute for religion. Modern philosophy, in so far as it is more than a technique of thought, is only

available to the tiny class that understands its language. What are our equivalents for the church-going of our fathers, or the philosophies of the ancient world? What are to-day the chief constant influences on the minds of the masses of the people? They are the film and the cheap press, uttering loudly and with the confusion of many inharmonious voices such doctrines as the prospect of immediate profit inspires. It is as though some malignant deity had said a second time, "Behold the people is one and they have all one language. Go to, let us go down and confound their languages, that they may not understand one another's speech." These substitutes for religion will not help us to recover a philosophy of life, or teach us again to speak a common language, or even to speak intelligibly at all. Such philosophies as can be discerned in the productions of Metro-Goldwyn and Beaverbrook are not adequate guides to life.

I do not believe that our need can be fully met except through religion; but an adult education based on, or largely infused with, history and literature rightly taught might help to bring some order into the spiritual chaos of to-day and to create a democracy which had "meat and raiment", but in which the life was more than the meat and the body than the raiment.

CHAPTER V

ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE EDUCATED

So far I have been speaking of adult education for the masses. It is our most obvious need, for at present they are not educated in any real sense at all; we cannot have an educated nation or a true democracy till they are educated; and adult education is the only road that leads to this goal. But there are other people, besides the masses. There is what is known as the educated class, in whose hands, though the composition of the class may change, the direction and leadership of the country will always rest. Paradox as it may sound, they need adult education more than anybody.

Our present theory of education—or at any rate our practice—is that every human being finishes his systematic education at a specific age; most of us at 14 or 15, the majority of the remainder at 17 or 18, the rest between 21 and 23, and that after these ages the need for systematic thought and methodical study are at an end. It is monstrous that some 70 per cent of the population are withdrawn from all formal educational influences at the age of 14, and that we—or some of us—are comforted by the possibility that in time they may remain at school till 16, as if education

was more than beginning at the age of 16. But it is almost equally absurd to regard formal education as ended when a man has been through school and university. No doubt it is better that education should cease at 21 or 22 than that it should cease at 14 or 15 or 16. But who can suppose that spiritual and intellectual growth ceases and knowledge and wisdom are finally achieved when a university degree is taken, or that the need of knowledge and wisdom does not grow more urgent with the passing of the years which bring us to positions in life when our influence on others is greatest and most momentous, influence on the state, influence on colleagues and associates, influence on dependants, influence at least on our own families, and when, concurrently, with these inevitable opportunities and duties, the cares of this life, if not the deceitfulness of riches, tend to choke the Word and it becomes unfruitful? Consider how far—for this is the question—a graduate when he leaves the university is prepared for life. Presumably he has had a thorough mental training; that is he knows how to read (as opposed to perusing) a book, how to weigh evidence, how to tackle a new subject—in short how to use his mind, at least in the field which he has studied and in fields cognate to them. That is—or should be—the first and the most important result of a good education. Second, he has presumably acquired a background of knowledge. The world is a jig-saw puzzle, the pieces of which are put into our hands, a chaos of isolated

fragments, which yet could be fitted into an intelligible and even beautiful pattern, if we had the knowledge and imagination and wisdom to do it. To the uneducated man the phenomena of the world and the incidents of his own life are separate bits of experience, which come before him singly, which he makes no attempt to combine into a whole, and in whose connections he is not interested. The educated man has had a glimpse of the design, or at least of a possible design; as each bit of the puzzle comes into his hands, he is aware that it is more than itself, and studies to fit it into its place in the whole. He has some conception of science and of what it can do; some knowledge of the history of man and of his adventures in the world; some grasp of those patterns, religious, intellectual, moral, by which prophets, poets and thinkers have tried to interpret human life—as it were, to put it together. He has got important clues to his jig-saw puzzle; he has a background to his life.

So far, so good; and if we were going to die at the age of twenty-two or a little later, all would be well. But most of us are going to live longer, and as we grow older to get into our hands increasing power—power over the fortunes it may be of the nation, of a government office, of a municipality, of a federation of employers or a trades union, of a university or college or school, of a business, of a family. In these later and most important stages of life can education do nothing further for us beyond what it did in early

years? Did the need and use of it stop at 22? Were we sent out from the university finished articles, requiring simply to be seasoned by experience of life? Perhaps, if the world stood still, the answer to the questions would be yes, and education, like Baptism or Confirmation, be an *opus operatum*, which once done needs no repeating. Unfortunately, the world does not stand still. *πάντα ῥεῖ* is the motto of the twentieth century; everything is in a flux and, as Heraclitus said, you cannot step twice into the same river. By the time, indeed before, a man is forty, the world of his twenties will have changed, new problems, ideas, forces, methods, revealed themselves, and with all of these he ought to make his reckoning.

But can the further reckoning be made without systematic education, that is without methodical study under some guidance from experts? Some people perhaps can make it, without such study, by private reading. But private reading has its limitations: we may not always know what books to read: we cannot ask books questions nor (equally important) can they question us: and do all people read even when they can? We need at least occasional periods when we can resume our education methodically and have leisure to renew our studies, deepen our knowledge, rethink our position, and, possibly, revive our ideals. The graduate who leaves the university is like a man equipped with a new motor-car, which needs to be run-in but is otherwise in excellent condition for the

road. But if he uses it for years without thorough periodical overhauls, it will cease to be a useful means of transport, and probably become a danger to the public.

And are not all of us in practice acquainted in life with such obsolete vehicles, cumbering a garage or crawling along the road? Are not all familiar, in parliament, in the churches, in education, in medicine, in government and municipal offices, in business, with men of forty years and over, whom the tide of their education carried some way up the shore and who are content to remain where it deposited them years before, who have found their way into directing posts by merit, by seniority, by mere efflux of time, who should be the pumps to drive the water of progress onward, and are at any rate the pipes and conduits through which it must pass, but who are in fact so furred and fossilised that they prevent its flowing at all? They may be men of ability and good will, they may have had an excellent education. But they are living in the world as it was when they were in their twenties, they have lost the intellectual and imaginative vigour which would have enabled them to move with the movement of the times; the pace is too much for them, it frightens them; routine, which is another name for action divorced from thought, gets an increasing grip on them; and the younger generation grumbles impatiently: "When will they retire or die, so that we can get on?"

This is one of the great problems of the age, the problem how to keep the middle-aged young. It is an individual problem, but it is much more than that, for it affects social and political life at every point. For the purposes of that life the middle-aged are more important than the young; they occupy inevitably most of the key posts and directing positions in national life; and they have the experience of human nature and affairs which are indispensable for practical business and which youth in the nature of things cannot have. It would be disastrous if men were physically old in their fifties, as they used to be, but it is an even greater national loss if most of them lose their intellectual and spiritual energy by that age. In the physical realm we have solved the problem; to-day a man of sixty or seventy may be physically almost a young man, and our attention needs to be given to the even more important question of preserving his intellectual vitality, if not intact, at any rate in good repair. It can only be done in one way. The body will not remain fit if its owner leads a sedentary life; nor will the mind. But what is the regimen necessary for preserving its youth?

I can put the answer in two words—Adult Education—of a new type. At present we tend to use the term as if adult education was a means by which those who leave school early could repair the gaps in their knowledge or the deficiencies in their mental training. But it is the need of all; for all men have such gaps and

defects, and the gaps grow greater as the world's knowledge advances. We need to become familiar with the idea that everyone engaged in routine or practical work, especially if he occupies a directing position, needs periods of systematic study in order to refresh and re-equip and reorientate his mind. There is no occupation or profession in which the resumption of systematic education in later life would not be profitable, and there are few human beings who would not greatly profit by it.

So far I have spoken of professional studies and argued (what hardly needs arguing) that if doctors, business men, civil servants, teachers and the rest of us had an opportunity, or, better still, recurring opportunities, to think over their occupations in later life and to study new developments and knowledge which affect these, they would go back to their work with new interest, vigour and capacity for it. But, besides purely professional studies, there are other interests common and important to all men—politics and economics, religion and the conduct of life. In all of them a man is infinitely better equipped for study after the age of thirty than he was as a schoolboy or undergraduate, for he knows so much more of human nature and the world: and each year adds to his equipment. And yet, under our present system, hardly anyone gets a chance of using it. We settle down in life with the opinions on religion, conduct and politics,

that we acquired at school or university. Circumstances change, knowledge grows, and the background of our mind insensibly alters. Perhaps we make some perfunctory revision, or it is forced on us. But mainly we cling to the paraphernalia with which we entered life, never clearing out lumber or reviewing and rearranging the contents of our minds. It is not surprising if we are apt to forget what is there and to attach little importance to it. Beliefs neglected are unused.

This is especially serious in politics, and in the most important subjects of all, religion and morals. They are subjects on which the young may form confident opinions, but on which they are least qualified to do it, for the data are given by life and of life they have seen so little. In fact they accept their views from others, from home or school or from teachers or books that have struck them. These may be right or wrong. But the young, whether they know it or not, live on borrowed property, however ardently they grasp it; only in later years will they come of age and be capable of holding property of their own. No doubt people, as they grow older, make some kind of reconciliation between the opinions of their youth and the experience of life: but it is, for the most part, a rough and ready compromise, patched up as they go. And religion and morals and politics need and deserve something better—more systematic thought and study. There is truth in Plato's advice to the young: "My lad, you are still

young and time as it advances will lead you to a complete reversal of many of your present convictions; you should wait for the future, then, before you undertake to judge of the supreme issues; and the greatest of these, though you now count it so trivial—is that of thinking rightly about the gods and so living well, or the reverse. . . . If you will be ruled by me, you will wait for the fullness of clear and confident judgement on these matters to come to you, and inquire whether truth lies in one direction or another, seeking for guidance in all quarters. . . . Meanwhile beware of all impiety towards gods.”¹ Profound and salutary as is this advice, it is generally useless to give it to the young. They know better. But we might give them the opportunity of knowing better still and of judging “of the supreme issues”, as Plato suggests, in later life. Mark Twain tells a story of a man who was in prison for sixteen years, and then, trying the handle of his door, found it turn and walked out to freedom. Here is a prison in which we have long been immured and from which we can escape by simply opening the door.

But can we open it? Such a system of adult education is obviously desirable; but is it practicable with the present organisation of our life? How are people to leave their occupations for periods of three to six months? One answer to this objection is that life

¹ *Lysis*, 888, tr. A. E. Taylor.

might be reorganised to enable them to do it—as it was reorganised when child labour was forbidden and as it must be reorganised to permit universal part-time continued education to 18. But even under present conditions there are occupations in which a systematic resumption of education is possible, and there are cases where it already exists. There are Summer Schools on many subjects. There are Adult Education Colleges like Newbattle and Coleg Harlech (though these are for a different type of student), and, for political studies, Ashridge. Closer still to my idea are the refresher courses for doctors, and vacation courses for teachers organised by the Board of Education and, even more admirable, in some cases by the teachers themselves. But if doctors and teachers need such courses, do not other professions need them also? Are medicine and teaching the only occupations in which knowledge grows, methods improve, and human beings run the risk of stagnating?

There are certain occupations in which Adult Study could be easily arranged, and in which it seems particularly valuable, because of their immense importance to the nation, because of the continual progress and enlargement in their field, and because it is desirable that persons in these occupations should keep abreast of what is done by foreign nations as well as here. I mean the Civil and Local Government Services—in which of course are included the teachers in schools controlled by the Government and the Local Authori-

ties. In connection with them two experiments on the lines suggested have been recently tried. The Commonwealth Fund now awards Fellowships for study in the U.S.A. to civil servants, to enable them to carry out inquiry or research on problems "akin to those which come within the scope of the Department in which they are serving". They are tenable for a minimum period of six months, and a maximum of twelve. In 1937 three Fellows were appointed to study respectively:

1. The system of granting patents in the United States, and its effect in encouraging new industries.
2. The place of music in American education.
3. The industrial organisation of the United States coal industry.

Here is an example of adults already engaged in professional work resuming their education. The second instance is the Summer School in Colonial Administration organised by Oxford University in 1937 and 1938 with the encouragement and help of the Colonial Office and Colonial Governments, which in its character and the breadth of its scope was a model for such purposes. It dealt with detailed problems of Native Administration but placed them in a wide general and comparative setting, including not only lectures by foreign experts on native administration outside the British Empire, lectures on local government, co-operation, education, which might

throw light on these issues in our dependencies, but also lectures on general economic, political and international trends. The mere meeting of more than 160 officials, drawn from many different parts of the British Empire, and comparing their respective methods and problems, must have been an education in itself. The experiment, as one of those who took part in it said to me, "revealed a tremendous need, whose existence we had never suspected". Both these are instances of the practice for which I have been pleading—the resumption of systematic education by adults engaged in practical work. These instances show that the whole thing is in the air. The need for such resumed education is felt—hardly consciously perhaps—and scattered provision for it is being made; for example, the Staff College established for the railways.

There is urgent need for Adult Education of this kind, and the best agencies to satisfy it are the universities, for they have the teachers, the libraries, the atmosphere and tradition of study and research. In a measure they have also the facilities. Most university bodies (notably, in the field of Social Science, the London School of Economics) have teaching and courses of the kind required. But they need to conceive such Adult Education as a regular department of their work and to push it—to do in fact in this field what they have done in the field of Extra-Mural Education. And they need also to organise definite curricula by shaping and grouping those courses which

they already have and where necessary providing new ones. In most universities an adult student who wishes to study a special subject can find without difficulty what he requires. But he will be puzzled where to turn, if he requires something more than specialist study, if he is looking for a course which will place his peculiar subject in a more general setting and enable him to see it not as an isolated phenomenon, but against its background of modern civilisation; still more if he wishes to get a general view of the world problem with its many aspects, moral, political, scientific, legal. No doubt by selecting lectures from different university departments and faculties, he could get what he wants. But it is not easy, and the university should help by making the selection itself, and drawing up definite programmes for Adult Study, in which many of its existing lectures would appear.

The universities can provide the water; but they cannot get the horses—or the right number of horses—to drink it. This is the task of the employer—in the first instance of the State and the Local Authority, because they are in a better position than any other employer to encourage the further education of their officials, and because the nation will gain most by their doing so. Already some Local Authorities have given certain of their officers sufficient leave for part-time study. Recently in the Diploma Course in Public Administration at Oxford, six of the candidates were persons between the ages of 25 and 35, holding

positions in municipal, county or rural government, who had passed their technical examinations but were not graduates. Five of them took the course by part-time study, obtaining sufficient leave for this from the Local Authorities employing them, but carrying on their regular duties at the same time. But an arrangement of this kind, though much better than nothing, involves strain and prevents that full absorption of the mind which is desirable in higher studies, and the State and Local Authorities should make a regular practice of seconding, on full pay, in the first instance a limited number of their promising officials for higher study, then extending the practice as experience suggests.¹

It will be said "you wish to take away, for six months or a year, our best men, just those whom we cannot spare": and if "do not wish to" is substituted for "cannot"—there are no impossibilities in these matters—this is a frank plea. But it is a bad one. It is the plea of the poor parent who does not wish his child to go to the secondary school, because by staying at home the boy can earn money forthwith; of the business man, who wants to get his able son at once into the firm and grudges the expense of time in his further

¹ In New York State there is a Municipal Training Institute which has training schools for persons employed in municipal administration. Between 1928 and 1936 these schools had an enrolment of over 43,000 drawn from all ranks of municipal employees. All officials receive their regular salaries while in attendance. See *Adult Education* (Regents' Inquiry Publication), p. 44 f.

education. It is a plea which (if nature did not show its absurdity in this case) could be made against giving holidays to an efficient official. "He cannot be spared." He *is* spared, because otherwise he would break down; and when it is realised that periods of systematic study are as necessary to the intellectual vigour of the mind, as periods of recreation to the health of the body, such periods will be recognised as a necessity, in order to avoid a different kind of breakdown, chronic and unrecognised, from which at present many officials and offices suffer. No one would hesitate to forgo the immediate use of money, if by parting with it for six months he could earn an ample return; and, if there is any truth in my arguments, the return will be ample, and the abler the official, the ampler the return, both for the man and for the body which he serves. A man lives with details, and immediate problems in the narrow deep-sunk pit of his daily work, and needs at times to climb out of it and look round; to see not only the department with which he is concerned but his occupation as a whole, and that occupation's place in the wider order of things; to remember that principles should guide individual decisions and to consider what these principles are; to study related problems and methods in other institutions and countries. Every moment the crust of routine is forming over the mind, thickening, and impairing its fertility; only a continually renewed activity of thought can break it up.

I envisage the growth of a practice by which the Government and Local Authorities will regularly second their more promising officials for periods of systematic study at the university. The growth may be slow. The more intelligent authorities will take the lead, and their reward will be not only that their officials will acquire a stimulus and knowledge, difficult or impossible to get any other way, but that the best men will wish to be their officials. Nor of course should the practice be confined to Civil and Local Government services: though it may begin with them. Some big firms already give study leave to picked employees: that is a habit which may well grow.

If the practice of resuming systematic education in later life became common, if in particular it became customary for the Civil Service and Local Authorities to second suitable officials for periods of study, a step would have been taken towards remedying a serious weakness in our national life—the neglect of the social sciences. There is much yet to be discovered in the field of the natural sciences, but no one can complain that they have been overlooked. But civilisation needs other kinds of knowledge as well, and the social sciences, essential if political and social life is to have a chance of being rationally built on a basis of ascertained fact, are in almost pre-Copernican darkness. How is this defect to be cured? Not by increasing undergraduate students of the social sciences; the undergraduate is not the person to advance know-

ledge. That is a task for the graduate. We must look therefore to larger endowment of the Social Sciences and to an increase of postgraduate workers in them. But we shall find difficulties in the Social Sciences which do not meet us in Natural Science. They are far more difficult subjects of study than the Natural Sciences, because to a large extent they are not laboratory subjects. They deal with human problems, and while you can isolate physical or chemical phenomena, you cannot isolate human phenomena, and therefore you cannot study them *in vacuo*—in a library or an institute—whether the subject is the Mobility of Labour or Municipal Trading or Public Assistance or Health Services or Methods of Election or Profit Sharing or the Psychology of Politics or any of the innumerable inquiries that belong to Sociology. Books, statistics, will take you some way and give you valuable and indispensable knowledge. But there remains a kind of knowledge which the academic student can never have, but which is possessed by those who have been in actual contact with the facts themselves, by the panel doctor or the city treasurer or the election agent or the managing director. Some of them at least have information which has not found its way into books; they are in a position to collect data and to make first-hand investigation. And besides concrete facts, they have a form of knowledge which may hardly be rational or even conscious, a sort of tact or intuitive perception of things as they are which

springs from living with them as they are. Unless this rich, immediate, if sometimes inarticulate, knowledge can be tapped, the study of the Social Sciences will be not only incomplete, but unreal and misleading.

It can be tapped by bringing back to the university those who have it—the civil servant, the municipal official, the doctor, the business man. This will not only add considerably to the data on which the Social Sciences must depend, and secure that cross-fertilisation of theory and practice, which is one of the most fruitful sources of advance in knowledge, but will insure against a real danger. The Social Sciences are the most difficult of all sciences, because their subject matter, human nature and conduct, is vast in extent and obscure and elusive in character. Any suitably intelligent and hardworking person may produce creditable work in Chemistry or Physiology, and even his errors will do no serious or lasting harm. It is otherwise with Sciences which aim at directing the policy of governments and the conduct of millions of human beings. For the study of such sciences a rare combination of high intelligence, acute insight and steady common sense is needed. Their progress has been retarded not only by a failure to recognise their importance but also perhaps by a perception of their risks. Psychology for instance is regarded with a mixture of respect and apprehension, and psychologists with a mixture of interest and mistrust. Its history is strewn with the wrecks of theories, which once were

the latest wisdom and now are outworn errors. Its investigations need to be assisted by every precaution, in order to avoid mistakes which may be disastrous and which discredit a study indispensable to the world. What better precaution can there be than an alliance of the laboratory worker and the practical man, in which theory illuminates and explains experience, and experience tests and checks theory? Such an alliance is planned in the most interesting and important of modern university developments. In the new Nuffield College founded in Oxford for postgraduate study it is intended that scholars and practical men shall work together. Lord Nuffield expressed his wish to bring "to Oxford experts from the practical field to co-operate in the theoretical study of social problems". Provision is accordingly made for the appointment of not more than twenty "University Visiting Fellows, who shall be persons competent to assist those engaged in the University in research by giving them the fruits of their practical experience in the professions or in industry or commerce". Nuffield College may also come to play an important part in "Adult Education for the Educated" here suggested.

This is a new function for the university—the organisation of Adult Study, not for those who have missed education in adolescence and youth, but for those who have had it. We might expect from such developments two most important results. They would be of immense assistance to those long-overdue

Sociological Studies, which should be the most important scientific development of the next fifty years. They are the only remedy for that chronic intellectual ill-health from which, generally without suspecting it, all of us more or less suffer with advancing years, because we do not take enough mental exercise.

POSTSCRIPT

*Secondary Education:
A Criticism*

SECONDARY EDUCATION: A CRITICISM

OUR present situation reveals the great need of the world. If the conventional stranger from Mars arrived in Europe at this moment—after a journey through the air more hazardous than usual—he would not so much be surprised by the fact that a war is in progress, for war unfortunately is nothing new, but he would be struck by something far more serious, by the appearance of a new philosophy of life. Perhaps I should say new philosophies. But Nazism, Russian Communism and in a less degree Fascism, though differing in methods, in their ultimate character have more similarities than differences. They do not know the meaning of certain words, which had been assumed to belong to the permanent vocabulary of mankind, certain ideals which, if ignored in practice under pressure, were accepted in theory. The least important of these words is Freedom. The most important are Justice, Mercy and Truth. In Germany and Russia Liberty, Justice, Mercy and Truth, if they can be said to exist at all, have lost the meaning which civilised men have hitherto given to them. In the past we have slurred this revolution over as a difference in “ideology”. In fact it is the greatest transformation that the world has undergone,

since, in Palestine or Greece, these ideas came into being or at least were recognised as principles of conduct. Suddenly and somehow the whole bottom has fallen out of our civilisation, and a change come over the world, which, if unchecked, will transform it for generations. It is the death, or deathlike swoon, of Christianity (Lenin and Hitler knew their enemy; and the Church of Italy knows its enemy), and also of the moral and religious ideas with which Greek and Christian thinkers tamed barbarism.

This country has so far escaped the contagion, and foreign observers are right who regard England as the country that, at however great a distance, comes nearer to a Christian civilisation than any other. And yet, if our Martian had visited England in pre-war days, he would have noticed profound changes in its philosophy. What would he think of the *Daily Mirror* and other papers, or of the intelligence and energy which we devote to football pools and the like? What would he suppose to be the view of life which created those characteristic products of our era, its advertisements, films and cheap press? Even if he took up a respectable paper like *The Times Literary Supplement* and noticed how largely our novels were preoccupied with the sordid aspects of sex life, what would he suppose the conscious or unconscious philosophy of the authors who wrote and the public which tolerated them? He would suppose that it had no philosophy at all; or at least that many of its inhabitants were of the type which

Plato calls the "democratic man" and which Ibsen portrayed in *Peer Gynt*. The essence of Plato's "democratic man" is that he has no ruling principle, no clear end, no standard by which he approves or rejects except the impulse of the moment; and his disease is that he does not know what goodness is, has no real hold on it, and so drifts to and fro. It is almost worse to have no principle than to have a wrong one. For, as Ibsen remarked, if you are really good, you may go to heaven, and if you are really bad, you may go to hell. But if you are neither, the Button-Moulder will come for you and put you into the scrap heap, to be melted down with other worthless metal. Or, if there is no button-moulder, a Hitler or Mussolini will come and do his work.

To treat a disease one must diagnose its causes, and the diagnosis of our disease is not difficult. It is a sickness of the spirit; the loss or weakening of the spiritual elements which should order life, discipline and overrule discordant or unworthy elements, and bring unity, purpose and direction into it. If so, we have to ask what this spiritual element is, where it comes from, how we can recover it.

The spiritual life of Europe, its civilisation in the full and deep sense of the word, comes from two sources, and only two, Greece, and Palestine. The share of the latter is obvious, but we must not underestimate the former—no one who knows the Greek achievement will. Christianity and Hellenism, these,

I repeat, are the sole sources of the spiritual civilisation of Europe. On them nineteenth-century education was based, and they penetrated and moulded the ideals and conduct of its thinkers, and very largely of all its educated men. Palestine and Greece. The first appears not only in almost every nineteenth-century thinker, including those, like Carlyle or Matthew Arnold, who rejected it, not only in reformers like Wilberforce, Shaftesbury, Maurice, Kingsley, but in the solemn Victorian portraits that ornament—or disfigure—the walls of our town-halls. It was a Christianity often heavily diluted, there was more of the Old Testament in it than of the New, its implications were not fully seized; still there was enough to give the Victorian world as coherent a philosophy as any age attains. Greece affected deeply a small class, but a very important one—the men whose thought was the ferment in the life of the time. There would be little left of Mill, Arnold, Pater, Jowett, or in a later day of John Morley, L. T. Hobhouse and Graham Wallas if you took the Greek element out of them, and even men like Ruskin and Gladstone would have been wholly changed. Yes, if Christianity and Hellenism were taken out of the life of the nineteenth century and of the generation still living which was educated during it, not much would be left. For it would have lost the most important element in any age or individual—its soul. It is just the soul which is missing in our age—there is nothing wrong with its body—and I suggest that its absence or

its weakness is due to the absence or weakness in our education of those influences that fed and fostered it—Christianity and Hellenism. It is not wholly missing, for those influences still persist. A small élite still learns Greek and is saturated in its literature. There are many homes and schools whose members have a chance of learning what Christianity is. And these forces have been too long in the European air to be quickly lost, and persist, as paganism persisted in the Christian era, a lingering and unconscious influence even with those who were unaware of it. But if you allow the spiritual basis of a civilisation to perish, you first change, and finally destroy it. Christianity and Hellenism are the spiritual bases of our civilisation. They are far less powerful to-day than 50 years ago. Therefore, we are losing that spiritual basis, and our civilisation is changing and on the way to destruction, unless we can reverse the process. *Hinc nostrae lacrimae.*

What is education doing to help? More, perhaps, than I suppose; but less, certainly, than it might. Cromwell described the laws of England as a "tortuous and ungodly jumble". That seems to me an excellent description of our education—at least of our secondary education. What an amazing and chaotic thing it is! One subject after another is pressed into this bursting portmanteau which ought to be confined to the necessary clothes for a journey through life, but becomes a wardrobe of bits of costumes for any emergency: and

from time to time someone discovers a new need and points out how ignorant we are of the U.S.A. or of our Dominions, or of Latin America and urges the inclusion of Colonial or American history, or of Italian or Spanish or Russian. And so we move towards a curriculum which recalls Burke's description of the Duke of Grafton's government—"a piece of joinery, crossly indented and whimsically dovetailed, a tessellated pavement without cement, here a bit of black stone, and there a bit of white". And to make the chaos more chaotic, we mix the clothes together indiscriminately in our curriculum, putting on a costume and pulling it off before we have time to button it up; a period of mathematics followed by a period of French; then some science, and then some Latin, and then an hour of history and then something else wholly unrelated to what went before; so making it impossible for the luckless child to settle into anything, encouraging in him a piecemeal attitude to knowledge, turning education into lessons, as if study was a series of right-about turns on a parade ground, and not a steady and continuous advance into an undiscovered country, where each step led to a further step, and each corner turned revealed a wider view

"Of that untravelled world whose margin fades
For ever and for ever as we move."

What is to be done? What practical steps can we take? Mathematics and French and history and

geography and the rest cannot be expelled from the curriculum. And children must, presumably, still learn like parrots much which they cannot understand. Only the other day I found a poor little child of 14 learning about the Treaty of Utrecht and the Pragmatic Sanction: as if at that age it was possible to envisage the ruse diplomats bluffing, bargaining, bullying; still less to have any real perception or grasp of the intricate issues involved. Perhaps it is necessary for these things to be plastered on the memory, however temporary may be their adhesion to it. But it is not enough to endure—or tolerate—the ills we have. For that will leave us where we are. What shall we do?

My first suggestion is that we should coordinate our chaos of subjects. But, how coordinate it? What common element connects the miscellaneous elements in a curriculum—mathematics, geography, French, history, science; have they any link except that they, or fragments of them, are supposed to be items in the mental equipment of an educated person, and that they appear in the syllabus of the School Certificate? It is a difficult problem, and yet these and all studies, either in themselves or in the way they are taught, fall naturally into two great categories—they deal either with means or with ends. It is essential, not perhaps for the pupil, but for the teacher, to have these two categories, means and ends, in his mind while teaching; if he does this, he can turn our educational chaos into something like cosmos.

This suggestion will sound unintelligible, but it is all in the opening of Aristotle's *Ethics*, where he points out that our actions aim at an end and are means to achieving it; we cook food in order to eat, we build ships in order to sail in them, we study medicine with a view to health. Further, he points out, our ends differ in importance, and all lesser ends converge or should converge on an Ultimate End or Supreme Good—the governing purpose of life: and the more effectively our means achieve their ends, and the more certainly they are overruled by the right Supreme End, the more successful our lives will be. That is true of education as well as of life. The child comes to school to be given means and ends; to discern, or begin to discern, an ultimate end at which his activities should aim, and to learn, or begin to learn, the means which will enable him to do his work in the world; to get, or begin to get, a vision of life as a symphony or work of art in which the parts are related to the whole, in which there are many lesser purposes—such as earning a living, doing a particular job, exercising a particular faculty—but all are subordinated to a governing purpose, or Supreme End—such an end perhaps as Milton conceived when he wrote that the end of learning was “to know God aright and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him as we may the nearest, by possessing our souls of true virtue”.

It would take too long to apply this distinction of

means and ends to all the subjects in education. Most of them are concerned with what I have called subordinate purposes or ends. Mathematics, for instance. The pupil learns it in order to become an engineer or an accountant or to add up marks or his house books or for some similar purpose; and also perhaps because it trains the mind. But mathematics is not concerned with the ultimate end of life; no one is the wiser about that for the hours he spends with Godfrey and Price's *Arithmetic* or Durell's *Geometry*. So with most subjects in education. Languages are not concerned with the supreme ends of life, especially if they are studied for the purposes of conversation or commerce; nor are science, or geography, or economics, or sewing, or cookery. I do not question the importance of these subjects; all are elements in the nourishment of the human being, but they are destitute, or almost destitute, of this essential vitamin. There are only four subjects in education which—if properly taught—continually confront the pupil with a Supreme End—theology and philosophy which study them directly, but with which the school is not concerned: and two subjects with which the school is very much concerned—literature, where all the visions of men are recorded; and history, where, behind the confusion of unceasing movement, the human spirit can be discerned weaving, painfully and uncertainly, a coherent design. It is to these subjects that the school must turn if it is seeking for higher ends.

I suggest then that the best way of bringing order into this chaos of the curriculum is for the teacher to have clearly in his mind this distinction of means and ends, and the need for higher ends, to feel that he is training his pupils to live a life that is a symphony and not a series of disconnected noises—even if they are beautiful noises—to see that while they acquire the means which they need for the practical purposes of life, they should also form an idea of the end at which they should aim. If that could be done, we should have cured the chief disease of our times. If you want a description of our age, here is one. The civilisation of means without ends; rich in means beyond any other epoch, and almost beyond human needs; squandering and misusing them, because it has no overruling ideal: an ample body with a meagre soul.

Some readers may think: "we do all this already, and in much better ways than you suggest". If so, I withdraw and apologise: and yet I feel that this or similar teaching is not universal and that many pupils leave school without a clear end or even the sense that such a thing is necessary. At any rate University teachers are familiar with a type of boy who is well-educated in the conventional sense, but who has no clear philosophy of life, nothing to fall back on in the hours of stress, discouragement or indolence that all men experience: who is easily swept off his feet by current sophistries or the fashion of the hour, and the voyage of whose life, even if he escapes these, tends

to be "bound in shallows". It is this type, so characteristic of the age, so like this age, that ought, if not to disappear, to become more uncommon.

What kind of teaching will achieve this? It is more a matter of the teacher's attitude than of the subjects taught; and the right attitude can be found in the books dealing with education in Plato's *Republic*. The subjects in his curriculum are also in ours. But in the *Republic* they are not regarded as lessons, still less as examination subjects; they are taught, according to the Greek tradition, for themselves and for their practical uses, as they must be in any sound system; but always in the educator's mind is the sense that everything in school is there in order to contribute to the making of human beings, developed in body, mind and character, equipped for the business of living, and ruled in their aims and actions by the vision of what Plato calls the Idea of the Good. Where that spirit is present, education will succeed; where it is absent, it can never have more than partial success. The mere existence in the teacher of such a view of education—and therefore of life—will communicate itself to the pupil, though the teacher may never mention it nor the child consciously realise it until long after; for a teacher's outlook educates more than anything that he says.

But there are more definite ways of imparting a sense of ends. In earlier years—and not only then—it comes indirectly through what is read. This method is described in Milton's *Letter on Education* and earlier still

in Plato's account of the education of a Greek boy: "when he has learned his letters and is beginning to understand what is written, they put into his hands the works of great poets, and he reads them sitting on his bench at school; and they contain many admonitions and stories and praise of famous men of old, which he is required to learn by heart, in order that he may imitate or emulate them or wish to become like them".¹ The great sources of ends are literature and history; the records of human visions of life and of human acts. Literature is one great storehouse of ends. The English are fortunate in having not only the greatest poet in the world, but the painter of the greatest portrait gallery of noble human types. This point is more important in the study of Shakespeare than Mr Verity's notes. In this connection I should like to stress the importance of learning poetry by heart and of learning the right poetry. There are few greater treasures to be acquired in youth than great poetry—and prose—stored in the memory. At the time one may resent the labour of storing. But they sleep in the memory and awake in later years, illuminated by life and illuminating it. I doubt if anything learnt at school is of more value than great literature learnt by heart. Not enough is learnt and what is learnt is often not worth learning. History is the other great storehouse of ends. Carlyle said that it is the essence of innumerable biographies; at any rate this side of it is the most intelligible and

¹ *Protagoras*, 326.

attractive to the young: and you cannot talk about any great man without immediately distinguishing two sides of him—his abilities and his ends. It is most important to distinguish them and too often they are not distinguished. The dazzling abilities of Napoleon and Bismarck blind us to the evil legacy they left to the world. I should like to see every child carry away from school portraits of a few great men of another type, as standards for judging, and touchstones for testing, human character. They must not be merely historical curiosities or the great men of a day; they must be men of all time and in the main stream of human progress; and they should represent different types of human excellence. Half-a-dozen would be ample, and every man will make a different list: my own would include Christ and Socrates, who presumably would find a place in every list, possibly St Francis, and certainly President Masaryk. He is on a different level, and yet among the statesmen of the modern world perhaps no figure is so instructive as this coachman's son who became head of a State and who was both a practical statesman and what Plato meant by a philosopher-king. He can be studied excellently in Capek's admirable biography, *President Masaryk tells his Story*.

So far, I have been concerned with a mainly unconscious habituation to right ends acquired by living with people who have had them, bringing the child into the atmosphere of spiritual health, so that a tainted

atmosphere becomes repugnant to him. At early ages it is not necessary to moralise about good; it is enough to exhibit it. But, especially if the pupil stays on at school till 17 or 18, he needs something more definite. It is not only in war and politics that the English favour the habit of muddling through. They do it in life, where it is even more dangerous. There is nothing more acute or more true in Plato than his insistence that what he calls *ἔθος ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας*, "habit without a settled principle", is not enough. It may be enough perhaps in an age of settled beliefs; houses built on the sand are secure in fine weather. But ours is not such an age. The rains descend and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat on us; and, unless the foundations of character go down below the sands to a granite rock of principle, a definite philosophy of life clearly seen and firmly held, the house is not likely to stand. Such philosophies you find, precise yet simple, in Christianity, and in Greece where natural religion and natural morals were born, and where their fundamental difficulties were faced with the simplicity and definiteness that we should expect from the people to whom we owe the very idea of a rational view of life.

So I would suggest that, before they leave school, those who have not learnt Greek should be introduced to Greek thought in translation. If they are capable of thinking at all about life, they are capable of understanding the ruling ideas of Hellenism. There seems

to be a curious idea that Greek is not relevant to our world. Nothing could be more relevant; for Greek made modern civilisation and is, as I said earlier, one of the two sources of our spiritual life. Greek literature *is* a view of life. Here, as nowhere else in European literature, is a clear unflurried vision of a rational human existence, which balances justly the claims of body, character and intellect, of material and spiritual civilisation, of the individual and the State. That is why the world, in ages of self-dissatisfaction, has so often turned to Greece, not to read a great literature, but to find a pattern of life; as the Roman Republic did in the full tide of conquest and material success; as the mediaeval world did, though it had the ideals and organisation of the Church; as did Mill and Ruskin and the thinkers who attempted to civilise the England of the Industrial Revolution. Greek literature contains, in textbooks on politics and ethics by men of genius, the antidote to that absence of higher ends which is our greatest weakness. Plato and Aristotle differ profoundly. Plato conceived that ideal of the dictatorship of an élite which constantly recurs in human history; Aristotle has everything of Liberalism except its weaknesses. But both regard politics as part of the indivisible tapestry of human life, where morals are part of politics and politics of morals, and where the State is conceived, not as embodied power, nor as an emporium providing for the needs of its citizens, nor as a vehicle lumbering heavily towards an unknown

destination, but as an organism, all of whose parts live, moving consciously towards a higher end.

If you ask what is meant by introducing people to Greek thought, I mean getting such knowledge of Plato as can be got from the volume of selections from him in translation which has just appeared in the "World's Classics". And that might be supplemented by some reading of the first four books of Aristotle's *Ethics*: or at any rate of the account of the virtues in the third and fourth books. Few things are more stimulating than to take this account, consider what we should add to Aristotle's list, what he prized and we do not, where we agree or differ from him, and how far we ourselves practise or wish to practise what he taught. Unfortunately there is no cheap and adequate translation of the *Ethics*. The best translation I know of is Mr Rackham's in the Loeb Library. Finally the pupil should be introduced to Stoicism. For Marcus Aurelius there is a brilliant introduction and translation by Jackson in the "Oxford Translations". But Epictetus is more bracing and more stoic.

All this leads up to Christianity, for which Greek thought, no less than the Roman Empire, prepared the way. And here we come to a difficulty. For Christians there are no difficulties in teaching it except those which belong to the teaching of a great subject. But there are teachers who do not feel certain enough about their beliefs to teach it confidently. What are they to do? My answer would be that there are certain things about

Christianity which almost any intelligent, candid and serious person believes and can teach, and that anyone who does not believe them may indeed teach mathematics or science or pure linguistics, but, in schools at least, had better leave history and literature alone. For the first and the most important thing in Christianity is the actual portrait, preserved in the Synoptic Gospels, of a carpenter's son who, gathering some followers round him, taught, healed, and lived his life in Palestine, and was crucified by the Roman authorities. To see Christ so is to see Him as His contemporaries saw Him in Galilee and in Judaea during His earthly life; to see what convinced the men closest to Him and who knew Him best, that he was not an ordinary man but the Son of God, convincing them not as

Light half-believers of a casual creed,

but so that they never hesitated for a moment to change their lives and to die for their conviction. That conviction of a few Jewish peasants in a minor dependency of the great and highly civilised Roman Empire seemed to most of its citizens an extravagant folly, but persisted as the Empire, apparently so stable and permanent, fell into collapse, and outlived every other creed and philosophy of the Graeco-Roman world. Thus much everyone must admit. It is a mere matter of fact. These facts do not exhaust Christianity, but they are, in the witness of St John's Gospel, the most important part of it. "These things are written that

ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life through His name." To expound these facts, though it is not to teach Christianity, is to give the premises for it. It is to give more of it than was ever given to some of us in what were regarded as Christian schools. And anyone given so much has seen the Christian life, and the grounds of the Christian faith.

To sum up. We have lost—at any rate in the post-primary school—our grip on education. It has become a mass of uncoordinated subjects, a chaos instead of a cosmos. Its dominating idea, so far as it has one, is to provide the equipment of knowledge which an intelligent man should possess. So it tends to become a collection of isolated subjects—a world of planets, as the Greeks conceived planets, stars wandering each on its irregular way, occasionally dashing into each other. For this we need to substitute a solar system whose ruling principle is the making of human beings. Many things go to their making, but essentially it is the training of three aspects of man, body, mind and character. And neither mind nor character can be made without a spiritual element. That is just the element which has grown weak, where it has not perished, in our education, and therefore in our civilisation, with disastrous results. Nothing can be done till that element is restored. Its only sources in Western civilisation—it would be different if we were Chinese or Hindus—are Palestine and Greece: and

I suggest that we may adapt and adopt as our motto the advice which Apollo gave to the Trojans. Seek out your ancient mothers. *Antiquas exquirite matres*. Anyhow the problem is there; it is the greatest of our problems; and, unless we solve it, our civilisation will perish.

